

# 7

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*Andy devises tough tests*



# Good

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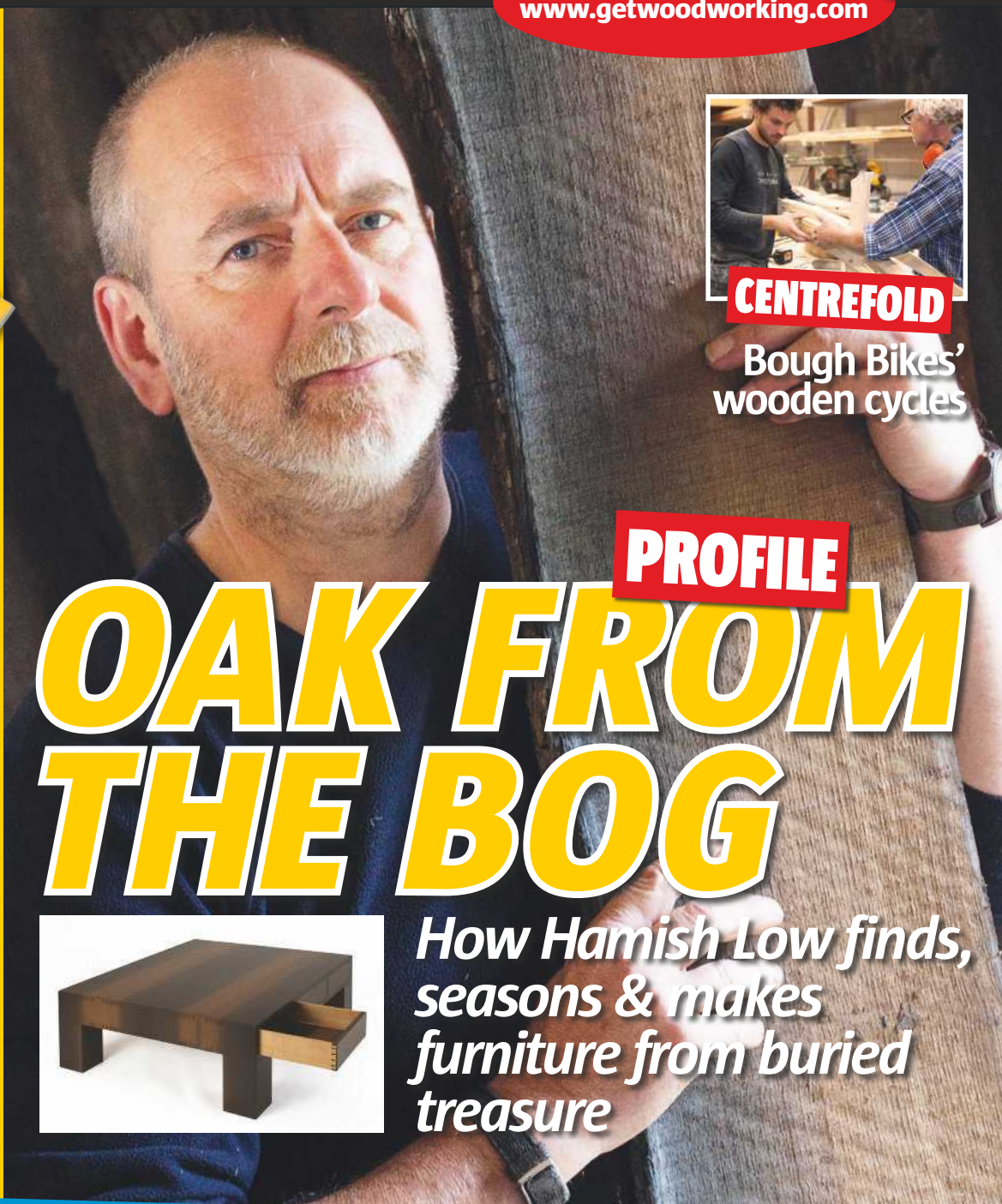


**BUILD**

Michael Huntley makes and uses a shooting board

**PLUS...**

- Turning: Les Thorne creates three projects for beginners
- Around the House: Phil Davy completes his kitchen refit
- Taming giants: from sequoia to thatched shed on wheels



**CENTREFOLD**

Bough Bikes' wooden cycles

**PROFILE**

# OAK FROM THE BOG



*How Hamish Low finds, seasons & makes furniture from buried treasure*

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# Welcome

It's all too easy to forget that it all happens with wonderful live trees, so this issue gets to the, er, roots of our obsession – in an entirely good way – with timber, from its felling to ingenious ways of using it. We meet David Vickers who runs a training school that aims to qualify students in safe chainsaw practice among other objectives, **p64**, and we feature the wooden bicycles made by a Dutch company, **p46**. A couple of years ago we introduced you to Crispin Keyzar, the man who successfully brought down those colossi of the forest, sequoia, and in this issue he shows you how he used wood from one giant to build a mobile thatch-roofed hut, **p48**. Dave Roberts meanwhile journeys back in time 5000 years to talk ancient bog oaks with UK guru Hamish Low, **p52**.

Michael Huntley shows his foundation course students how to make and use a shooting board to ease the process of planing, **p38**, and Edward Hopkins visits a furniture maker who is both a perfectionist and a 'productioniser', **p60**.

Phil Davy cuts into his precious worktop, **p74**, and Andy King reviews seven jigsaws that would have been more than equal to the kitchen job, **p16**. And, with beginners in mind, Les Thorne turns a trio of objects, **p80**.

**Andrea Hargreaves, Editor**



**Andrea Hargreaves**  
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Consultant Editor

*We endeavour to ensure all techniques shown in Good Woodworking are safe, but take no responsibility for readers' actions. Take care when woodworking and always use guards, goggles, masks, hold-down devices and ear protection, and above all, plenty of common sense. Do remember to enjoy yourself, though.*

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# Good Woodworking

December 2014

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Tools • Projects • Techniques • Advice



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...but there's some great kit out there

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# Future from the past

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**GW  
288**  
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| Devil 6005  | 2.5-5kW     | £74.99  | £89.99  |         |
| Devil 6009* | 4.5-9kW     | £129.98 | £155.98 | £239.98 |
| Devil 6015* | 5-10-15kW   | £189.98 | £227.87 |         |

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| MODEL       | HEAT OUTPUT | EX VAT  | INC VAT | NOW     |
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| MODEL           | MOTOR | WET/DRY  | EX. VAT | INC. VAT |
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| CVAC25SS*       | 1400W | 19/17ltr | £64.99  | £77.99   |
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\*SS = Stainless Steel

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## NEW CLICK & COLLECT

# Good Woodworking News *from the bench*

Comment, insight, views and news of woodworkers from around the globe



## Stanley ticks the boxes

When your knees are already aching from the day before, the last thing you want is to have to make several trips to the van when starting a day's site work. So bring on the new FatMax Technician case. It features a glass-fibre reinforced polypropylene body with heavy-duty metal latches. Available in two models, the wheeled option includes an aluminium handle and smooth bearing wheels. Removable dividers and cups allow for your own customisation to enable flexible and accessible storage of essential tools. The patented accordion internal structure enables full visibility and accessibility of tools.

The Dual Access Bag has a carrying strap and free-standing rigid structure. The reinforced plastic base protects tools from water and dirt.

### Get it taped

The new Autolock tape has a patented reverse lock mechanism for greater control and increased blade life, coupled with a 3.33m blade standout for increased reach. It includes two additional hooks, one magnetic and one XL, that can be stored in the tape itself. The XL hook enables the user to hook the tape side-on to the structure, so there's no need to twist the tape.

The new tapes are available in 5m or 8m lengths, both metric and metric imperial and come with a Mylar-coated blade. Blade armour on the first 80mm is designed to make them ten times more resistant to abrasion than traditional lacquered blades.

For further information on the Stanley range go to [www.stanleytools.co.uk](http://www.stanleytools.co.uk)

## Dremel in festive mood

Clever Dremel is promoting its Home Repair Project kit for Christmas containing the 3000 multitool, the shaping platform attachment 576 for precision sanding, cutting guide 565 and flex shaft 225 plus 105 accessories including EZ SpeedClic accessories which are designed for quick and easy changes. All are contained in a soft bag and cost £79.99ssp from [Dremel-Direct.co.uk](http://Dremel-Direct.co.uk), [Tool-Shop.com](http://Tool-Shop.com) and DIY shops.



## Record Power buys Camvac

The Camvac extractor business is now in the hands of Record Power. Camvac MD Paul Hendry-Smith says: "We are delighted that they have chosen the Camvac range to complete their existing models. The transfer fits into Record Power's long-term strategy of increasing their production in the UK and all current Camvac products will remain in production using exactly the same tooling and manufacturing techniques." Production has moved to Record Power's Chesterfield site. All sales, warranty and other enquiries should be made to Record Power. Call 01246 571020 or email [sales@recordpower.co.uk](mailto:sales@recordpower.co.uk)



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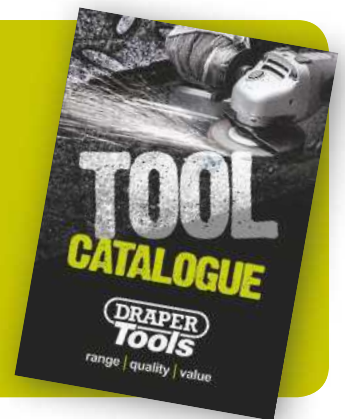


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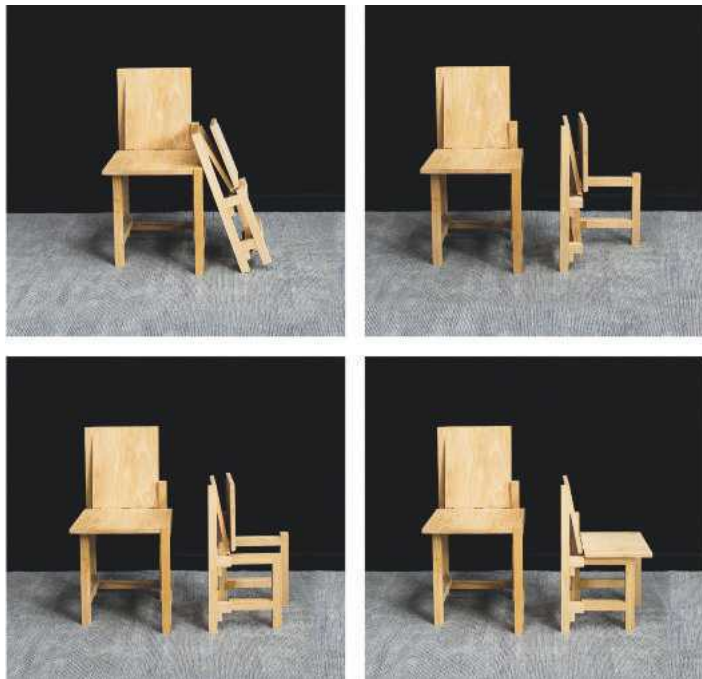
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The finish of the Harrison Table is superb



Now you see it, now you almost don't

# Bespoke awards

By the time you read this the Wood Award winners of 2014 will have been chosen, but to us these three shortlisted entrants in the Bespoke Furniture category are all worthy of the top place.

We love Edmund Stephens' Harrison Table made from solid English walnut, walnut burr veneer and cast bronze, designed to display a hand-made John Harrison sea clock. He says: "We chose English walnut, due to the beautiful grain pattern, and it's relative rarity compared to the much used American black walnut. A burr veneer was used for the top and underneath of the tabletop, picking up the tones of the solid legs and rails, whilst adding a luxurious feel to the piece. Cast bronze elements made at a local foundry complemented the walnut, and enabled us to engrave [a] wedding anniversary date discreetly into the table's under frame."



**James Ryan is such a perfectionist that for consistency of grain and character consecutive boards were used from one boule**

For sheer ingenuity Norie Matsumoto's folded chair would take some beating. She designed it for a project called 'Out of the Woods' and says: "The starting point of the design was how the chair could become a beautiful

timber object while it is folded, so that the journey to find the folding mechanism was how to open the folded chair, rather than how to fold the chair." It is made in American ash and uses hinges although an earlier concept employed knuckle joints.

The Barnsley Workshop's talented James Ryan scores another bull's eye with his Scorched Oak Rocking Chair in English oak and Danish cord (woven paper strands). He says: "It is based on a dining chair design that I have developed over a number of years. This particular dining chair has a really comfortable and form-fitting back shape. I had to scale up the sizes to achieve the generous and roomy proportions I wanted for this rocking chair.

"I also wanted all the joints to appear to seamlessly grow out of the other components. Using timber allowed me to fine tune the constantly changing cross section. There are parts of the chair that are circular in cross-section that then morph into an oval shape. This is whilst also tapering and curving in profile." It is wire-brush finished.

## You saw it here first...

The Middle Drawbridge at the Tower of London, featured in *GW280*, was on the shortlist for a Wood Award in the commercial and public access category. Designed by Carden & Godfrey and made by GMT Timber Frames with wood supplied by Vastern Timber, it replaces an oak structure dating from 1915. Works involved cladding a steel frame and creating a traditional heavy carpentry superstructure in green oak.

The new structure includes a fixed triple-arched bridge and a functioning drawbridge, a feature absent from the Tower since 1978. All work was carried out by a team of four from a workshop located on site in the dry moat and took six weeks to complete.

It is anticipated that it will provide the principal entrance to one of the capital's most iconic buildings for generations to come.

**...And up she goes: the Tower is safe thanks to GMT Timber Frames of Somerset**



## Industry sponsors young talent

The Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers recently hosted its Young Furniture Makers exhibition, featuring exhibits from students at all levels, from a variety of colleges and universities including Birmingham City University, Bucks New University, Burnley College, De Montfort University, Edward Barnsley Workshop, Leeds College of Art and Design, London Met, Plymouth University, Rycotewood and Warwickshire College. Awards were made for a number of industry partnerships, where companies such as Burbidge, Ercol, Hands, Gordon Russell, Crofts & Assinder, Willis & Gambier and KI Europe worked with university students on specific projects.



Joseph Kennedy with his winning Stem Table

Alex Stewart was awarded Young Furniture Maker of the Year for his contribution to the development of the group and the growth of its membership throughout the year. Joseph Kennedy, who has just completed his MA in Design, Maker and Materials at Plymouth Uni, won an all-expenses paid trip to the Blum factory in Austria for having the best exhibit of the show, the Stem Table.

The Master of the Furniture Makers' Company, Paul von der Heyde, said: "One of our key objectives is to nurture our Young Furniture Makers group, providing them with useful,

relevant support and encouragement so that they remain within the furnishing industry and become the leaders of tomorrow."

The competition was sponsored by Axminster Tools & Machinery whose sales director, Alan Styles, a continuity of these skills was the lifeblood and future of furniture design and manufacture in the UK.

## Yet more Walsh magic

The *GW* office was collectively mind boggled by Joseph Walsh Studio's Celestii Magnus featured in issue 285. Now, with minds blown completely, we bring you its Lilium series.

"Lilium," says the Studio, "explores the relationship between the geometric and the organic; while some of the pieces' elements keep to symmetrical repetitions, others erupt into glorious, abstract shape. The finished pieces blur the line between still and living objects, while capturing the natural instincts for growth in the material, the maker and the viewer. They mimic nature's patterns, beginning with a cohesive bulb/form and growing according to a diverse set of circumstances."

In this work, Joseph finds the piece's forms by following the curve of the wood so that the sculpture evolves from a structured, predictable object into a freely flowing work.

The making process involves stripping ash into thin layers and shaping the sculptures, layer upon layer, while allowing the material to evolve into its final form.







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# COURSE DIARY

Got friends who would like to start out on woodwork? Below are a few ideas to get them started. For a heavy hint for yourself, mark the ones you like the look of and leave GW open at this page. Here's hoping...

## December

**1-2 Christmas decorations, gifts** (Axminster)

**3-4 Beginner routing** (Sittingbourne)

**4-5 Beginner routing** (Axminster)

**4-5 & 8-9 Woodturning** (Axminster)

**10-11 Woodcarving** (Axminster)

**10-11 Woodturning** (Sittingbourne)

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**3-5 Safe operation wood machines**

**8-12 Beginner furniture making**

**15-18 Veneering & laminating**

**22-23 Tool sharpening & care**

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The Threshing Barn

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Upton upon Severn

Worcestershire

WR8 0SN

Tel: 01684 591014

**4 Greenwood spoon carving**

**5-7 Handcut dovetails**

**12-14 Nordic bowl carving**

**18 & 19 Turned bowl**

**19-21 Woodturning beginners**

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**6-7 & 13-14 Stool course**

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## January

**5-9 Advanced furniture making/box**

**17 & 24 French polishing and refinishing**

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The Threshing Barn

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Upton upon Severn

Worcestershire

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Tel: 01684 591014

**8-11 Making simple furniture/beginners**

**16 Greenwood spoon carving**

**22 Turn a bowl/beginners**

**22-25 Bowls & platters/intermediate, advanced**

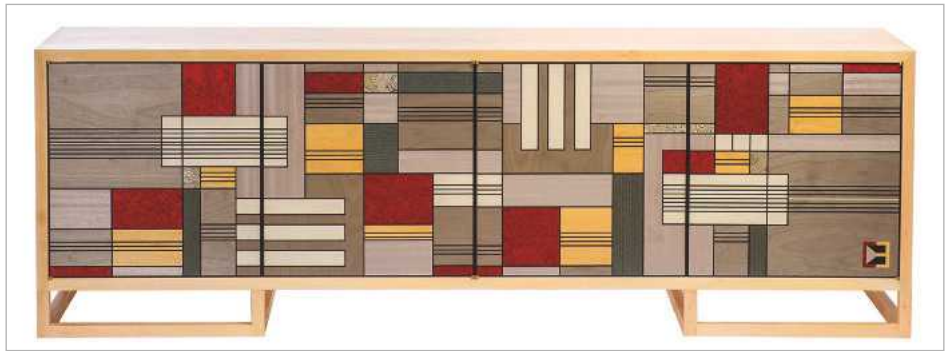
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Christine Meyer-Eaglestone and Chris Tribe collaborated on Grid IV

## Looking north

Lest anyone be fooled into thinking furniture making is a southern pursuit, members of the Northern Contemporary Furniture Makers group are proving this notion to be wrong. Christine Meyer-Eaglestone sold a marquetry-embellished sideboard at Tent London on which she had collaborated with fellow member Chris Tribe who constructed the carcass of Grid IV.



Richard Burnley's clients were so pleased with this desk that they ordered a chair to go with it



John Gabler's ottoman conceals a TV-watching device

Richard Burnley has just completed a writing desk. His clients were very particular about the doors, drawers, pigeon holes, size etc, but left the design and aesthetics to him. It is made from walnut, bird's eye maple and burr madrona, with a leather writing surface. It has been such a successful addition to their home that the clients have since ordered a matching chair.

John Gabler has just delivered his latest commission too, an elegant ottoman. The brief was that it must blend in seamlessly with existing bedroom furniture. It sports an internal lift so that you can watch TV in bed and then neatly tuck away the unsightly device when it's lights out.

## Wales safer from tree pests

Wales is safer from the threat of one of the most invasive and damaging forest pests in the world, according to latest findings by scientists from Forest Research in Wales.

The new information tool-kit has been developed in Wales as part of the REPHRAME project, which aims to help reduce the impact of the pine wood nematode to the pine woods of Europe.

Thanks to a computer modeling system developed by Dr Hannah Gruffudd, it is possible to predict where the pine wood nematode will strike next.

"The model accounts for local tree species, climate and topography to produce tailored outputs that enable users to judge whether their forests are at risk of dying from this pest," Hannah told delegates at the three-year project's final workshop in Madrid.



Professor Hugh Evans, centre, of REPHRAME Wales, with other members of the international team in a Portuguese forest

## OFFCUTS

Bed manufacturer Silentnight is leading the development of a new furniture apprenticeship scheme standard in a project supported by 106 employers. The new apprenticeships will be employer led and designed to respond to industry needs and will be graded on completion.



Dovetailors has opened its doors to the public after relocating to an old textile mill in West Yorkshire. The bespoke furniture makers worked hard to ensure its workshop was up and running within hours of the move to historic Sunny Bank Mills in Farsley so that existing orders could be completed without impacting on delivery schedules. The core Dovetailors' team comprises David Wilson, Jason Winder and

Emmanuelle Bastide-Wilson who are supported by local cabinetmakers. Glass panels in the workshop allow visitors to see work in progress and a design store stocks small items.



Why do we make things? Peter Korn tries to answer this question in a rather Zen-like way in a book, part memoir, part polemic and part philosophical reflection, that explains what it means to be a craftsman among mass production. Korn draws on four decades of hands-on experience to answer the question. *Why we make things and why it matters* is published by Square Peg in February at £25 hardback or in ebook form.

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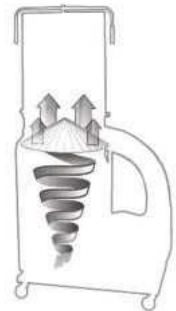
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# Kit & Tools

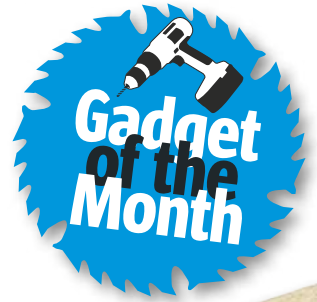
New products, tools and tests



Well I guess it was inevitable that after my wife saw the Kitchen Special last month I would be taken to task to fit a new one at home! I don't have the time or space to build from scratch so it's a decent ready-to-go one, but re-tiling the floor and fitting the new one while still needing the kitchen to be usable meant doing it in stages – not ideal! Still, the major hurdles are over, leaving my favourite (not) task, the decorating, which will now likely mean the whole house...

Andy King, Technical Editor  
andy.king@mytimemedia.com

## Flexicut knife strop



Using a strop will raise an edge that bit further and while I guess it would be easy to say you could make one of these yourself, for less than a tenner this one's raring to go. What you get is a good-quality leather bonded to a stained wooden block complete with a block of Flexicut Gold polishing compound.



It will prove useful for the carvers especially, with chip-carving knives and other straight-edge or convex blades working well.

But it's not just the carvers that benefit; I often touch up an edge on a flat strop, whether chisel or plane iron, and this, being of similar size to a standard oilstone, is ideal for such jobs.

You can see the polishing take effect when first used, quickly blackening the yellow compound, and you don't always need to charge the strop as it will continue to cut for a considerable time after you have loaded the leather.

I did find the leather very dry though, so the compound was quite powdery on the surface; a little 3-in-1 oil on the leather to allow the compound to soak in and bed in solved this.

The ability to raise an edge that bit higher with just a few deft swipes, or to refresh an edge that is starting to dull without having to go back to the stone means the Flexicut should prove invaluable to anyone's sharpening regime, even a single diamond stone enthusiast like me!

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### How we rate...

- ★ Don't get your hopes up or your wallet out!
- ★★ Well, it works but really needs improvement
- ★★★ Performs well, but you will find better
- ★★★★ Great performance and value for money
- ★★★★★ So good, even Andy would get his wallet out!



# WAR OF THE SAWS

Today's cordless jigsaws are a whole lot more versatile than their mains forebears, but which is the best buy? Andy tells you what he looks for in these machines, how to use them, and puts seven to the test





▲ Plunge cuts are easily made with a jigsaw; tilt the saw to start then keep it steady as you begin to tilt it into the work



▲ Once it has pierced the work you can cut as normal



▲ Cordless saws are ideal for cutting apertures in worktops



▲ You can also work tight to walls with tops in situ



▲ Notching work for pipes and so forth is simple



▲ Curved bracket work should be part of the remit, and the cut should be square



▲ Testing the saws on 90mm stock, Andy cut a basic curve

Once you start getting into your woodworking and begin expanding your kit, a jigsaw is a very versatile tool to own, and designs have changed somewhat since the first one I ever used. All to the good as well; my first encounter involved the use of a hex wrench to secure the blade, and in truth the word 'secure' may be a bit of an anomaly as it invariably worked loose under load.

Coupled with a simple up-and-down shaft movement, without the luxury of a pendulum action, it was little wonder that cutting anything of any substance was not the easiest of tasks; even thinner stuff took an age and I regularly had to reach for the spokeshave to tidy up any curved work I cut with it.

That jigsaw cost quite a princely sum at the time, and to get anywhere near a top-end

machine with a pendulum action was a king's ransom and, in my own particular working environment, only owned by companies and let out to the workforce as needed; I certainly never knew anyone who owned such a machine although I guess there were not that many self-employed chippies either...

Of course, it was mains power all the way back then; the battery tool market had barely even drawn breath at the drill/driver stage so any thought of a jigsaw powered by a battery seemed highly unlikely.

## Battery power

The battery-powered jigsaw came into its own as soon as the battery power and the amp hours they could store began to rise; alongside better blade retention and the pendulum

action found on the mains models, they became a viable option.

The real difference in these battery-draining tools, however, has come with Li-ion batteries and their massive Ah storage. These are now equal in stature to the mains models in the features they have as well as the capacities they can cut; gone are the days of struggling even on sheet materials, as with my initial introduction to them.

Most manufacturers have joined the fray, with the best going for the trade favourite 18V platform.

It's surprising, however, just how much variation there is in this area though; they all opt for the fast tool-free blade swap and pendulum action but the rest of their design and build varies dramatically, so it's time to

# Engineered Precision



## Accurate Cutting

**TTS 1400**

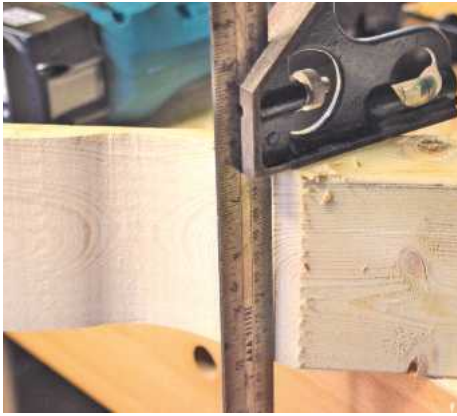
The TTS1400 Plunge Track Saw is a highly versatile, feature-packed tool with easy mode selection, fast set-up and advanced safety features.

When fitted to a track, the TTS1400 delivers long, straight cuts, and the flat design of the blade housing means the saw will work right up to the edge of the workpiece – ideal for trimming doors and cutting hardwood flooring.

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For straight, clean and accurate cuts through any type of wood, Triton's TTS1400 Plunge Track Saw delivers a professional result every time.





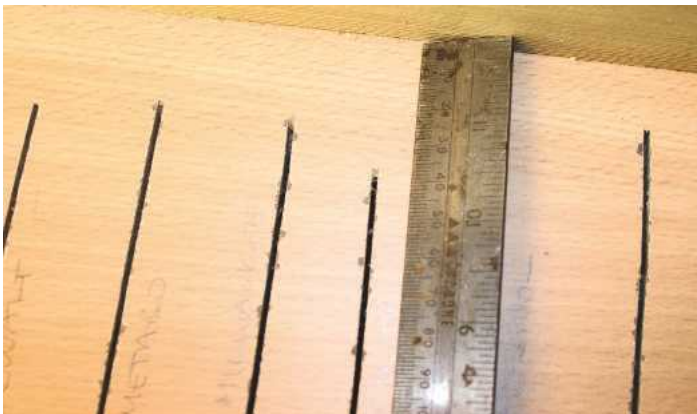
▲ A test for square was made after each cut; some showed signs of drift



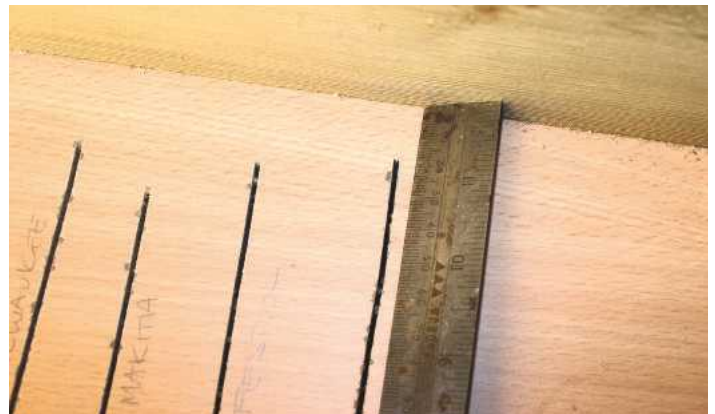
▲ Zero drift was posted by Festool, Bosch and DeWalt



▲ Each saw was also tested for how close it would get to a vertical surface



▲ Worst was the Makita at 37mm from the upright face...



▲ ...while the Hitachi got as close as 17mm

take a closer look at each one and see what boxes they tick.

Here I am looking at machines from Bosch, DeWalt, Festool, Hitachi, Makita, Metabo and Milwaukee. Each is reviewed and rated separately but for a quick spoiler some quick comparisons are given below.

## Making the cut

It was noticeable that the cutting action of each saw varies quite markedly on deeper cuts. All claim to cut 90mm and beyond, so it made sense to fit a suitable blade to each and try them on 90mm stock.

There were some pretty smooth operators among them, notably the DeWalt, Makita, Metabo, Milwaukee and the Festool. Bosch did well but was quite slow in making the cut, the pendulum action being not quite as aggressive as the rest. Hitachi on the other hand was quite a rough ride, both making the cut and in the quality of the finish. It also returned the worst of the cuts when checked for square, showing around 3-4mm of drift.

Best performers here were Bosch, DeWalt and Festool, all registering zero drift. Milwaukee, Metabo and Makita all had marginal drift, 1-2mm, and all, with the exception of the Hitachi, left a very clean finish.

The DeWalt, Metabo, Festool, Milwaukee and Makita were also strong in keeping momentum through the cut as they came under load, maintaining the cutting speed as the load increased.

## Vertical test

Next check was how close to a vertical surface they cut to.

The Hitachi did the best, getting as close as 18mm, with Makita posting the worst, 37mm being as close as it could get. The rest of the saws all managed to get around 25mm to the vertical surface.

While the Hitachi does allow a cut to get that bit closer, it also means there's minimal bearing surface to start the cut, which can make it a tad tricky to align the saw if you are looking for a very accurate start to a cut.

## Dusty answers

During this test it was also a good chance to check the ability of each saw to blow dust away from the cut area. Although only some of the saws have a dedicated blower that can be

switched on or off, some of those that don't do have a built-in blower.

So while the majority dealt with the build up of dust very well, the Makita with no dedicated blower struggled, with dust collecting around the cut area very quickly.

However, it was the Milwaukee that was the surprise; having an adjustable blower it should have dealt with the dust easily, but no matter what setting I had it on, the dust still built up, so a bit of a disappointment there.

## General performance

General cutting performance on the bread-and-butter thinner stock – sheet materials, chipboard core worktop and the like – was an area where all the saws did well.

Set on their highest pendulum setting, each was used on laminate worktop and 18mm MDF.

► The trade off with the Hitachi was very little bearing surface at the start of the cut



# Kit & Tools



▲ Festool performed well in the dust-blowing test...



▲ ...but Makita, with no switchable blower, didn't cope very well...



▲ ...and Milwaukee's adjustable blower failed to clear irrespective of setting

The Hitachi, with the short distance between the sole and the blade, was a little harder to get aligned to a cut line, but the variable-speed trigger was certainly advantageous in starting the cut.

The more aggressive nature of the pendulum on the Hitachi also bumped it through the work, but with a rougher finish to any cut edges than the others.

The Metabo, Bosch and DeWalt all hit similar performance levels to each other, the cutting action and subsequent cleanness of cut very sweet, and the compact boxy designs made them easy to control.

The biggest plus factor on these has to be the variable-speed triggers though; I was able to finely adjust the speed in progress to make intricate cutting very controllable.

The Milwaukee, the only body grip here, was nonetheless quite a decent drive even though the two-speed motor prevented any finer control on some cuts. I did find the longer body, held with my free hand on top of the

saw, made for quite a manoeuvrable and stable saw despite the overall length.

That leaves Makita and Festool as the two with a different approach to the sawing action.

With both engaging an idling speed when first switched on, and then picking up speed once contact pressure is made between the blade and the workpiece, it takes a little getting used to initially.

Festool has still managed to get a variable-speed trigger within this so there is some scope for control, but not as good as the true variable-speed options of those that have it. It does have a very clever base setup though, but at a price.

It's an area where you can get the most from a jigsaw if you are inclined to do so, but bear in mind that this tool was designed more for cutting and shaping work rather than high-end accuracy despite Festool going the extra mile with this one. That said, the tilting base with its 180° range of angles will certainly find its mark, as will the circle-cutting attachment. The blade retention system is a further strong



▲ The Festool bevel base is highly adaptable

point, the additional adjustable guides working well at keeping the blade from drifting on deeper cuts.

Makita's saw put in a decent enough performance across the board but with no variable speed trigger and the constant need to activate the safety button on top of the saw every time a cut is made was a frustration for me. The brushless motor is a plus point in getting the size down as well as minimising maintenance, but for me, this doesn't make up for the pitfalls.

For my final evaluation advance to page 30. Read on from page 22 for the individual tests.

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# Kit & Tools

## Bosch GST 18V-LI B



**T**o me Bosch is king of the jigsaws. This company has been the innovator with mains power machines over the years, leaving rivals to play catchup, so I was hoping to see similar high-end specification ported over from the flagship GST 150 BCE mains model and used on this, the latest 18V Li-ion machine.

In reality, it's a sort of halfway house; instead of the innovative double roller blade support there's the basic single roller. It doesn't do too badly though, seeming happy enough in sheet material or worktop cuts with a suitable blade, and it doesn't lag in the power department either, keeping the pace even when it's pushed hard.

The cut in 90mm timber was a bit more laborious though; the pendulum action seemingly not as aggressive as some others, but the cut was clean and with zero drift on the squareness of the cut.

The blade retention is tucked in tightly and may be a tad tricky to get to if you tend to have fingers like Bowyers pork sausages. There's only a small tab on the collar accessible to eject the blade, but it's spring loaded so is fired out easily.

Fitting a blade is very simple: simply push the blade into the shaft until it clicks and the retention collar locks around the shank, preventing the blade from coming loose.

If you are looking for manoeuvrability and a lightweight jigsaw then Bosch has gone for both here. It's a compact 260mm long and 2.4kg with

its battery in place, making it a very ergonomic saw for tighter spots especially.

And if comfort is high on your agenda then picking this one up is a joy; the handle is second to none, with a really slim and comfortable rubberised grip.

### Cutting control

Cutting control is paramount for me, a variable-speed trigger is what it's all about and Bosch has come up trumps here with a responsive trigger that allows you to set the stroke rate as slow as you like with the lightest of touches, eliminating any need for a speed dial.

I found it second nature to control a cut, slowing into an intricate area to gain maximum control before accelerating through the cut as I straightened up by increasing the pressure.

To complement this there's a standard pendulum control located to the left side of the saw with three stages as well as an off position to vary the aggressiveness and speed of the cut.

It certainly doesn't slouch in timber, easily keeping up when I was making quite forceful

and fast cuts in 19mm sheet stock and 40mm worktop.

A built-in blower keeps the cut line clear and there's also a trigger-operated LED worklight.

For base tilting a hex wrench is supplied and stored aboard. The machine tilts to 45° in both planes and has positive indents at each 45° setting as well as the 90° position for fast setting. The alloy base also has a screw-fitted plastic anti-scratch shoe to protect delicate surfaces, and can be replaced.

### Conclusion

A compact and lightweight saw with good features but missing the full gamut of its mains counterpart.

### Good The Woodworking Verdict

- + Responsive trigger; good blade retention; very compact
- Small blade eject lever; hex key base adjust

**Rating** ★★★★★

**Typical price:** £400.00 with 2 x 4.0Ah batteries

**Max cut in timber:** 120mm

**Max cut in steel:** 8mm

**Stroke length:** 23mm

**Speeds:** 0-2700 strokes per minute

**Weight:** 2.4kg

**Web:** www.bosch.co.uk



▲ Blades are fitted by simply pushing until the collar locks around the shank



▲ Slide the collar around and the blade is ejected without having to touch it



▲ A small worklight is tucked in alongside the blade holder



▲ You can adjust the cutting action with the pendulum lever



▲ Making a plunge cut on a worktop is easy with the GST 18V-LI B

of the  
**BEST**

## DeWalt DCS331

**W**here manufacturers may redesign or cut back some features on their mains model to get a battery machine to market at a budget ceiling, DeWalt has simply ported over its mains model lock, stock and barrel, and that's no bad thing because it's a great machine.

The saw has solid features throughout with the only real negative being the lack of spring eject for the blade, so you may find you have to try and get a hot blade out if it doesn't drop of its own accord once it's released.

This is down to the use of a clamping mechanism rather than the wrap-around collar found on the majority of the saws on test. It does its job very well indeed though, and blades are easy to fit.

But if you want a robust blade retention lever, then take a look at the front end of this saw and it's certainly built for the rough and tumble of the building site with no plastic bits that could be prone to snapping.

This rock-solid all-alloy front section is complemented by an equally robust baseplate. It comes with a clip-on plastic anti-scratch shoe for working on finer surfaces, but where it really scores is the tool-free adjustment.

A lever releases the lock, allowing it to tilt through its 45° positions to the left or right, and with indents at 15, 30 and 45°, plus the 90° position, it's a fast saw to set for working common angles.

### Bosch heritage

DeWalt has nicked a bit of Bosch heritage with the inclusion of a switchable blower, and it's very efficient at keeping the cut line free of debris, but if there is a negative in seeing the cut line, the saw doesn't have an LED worklight – quite a rarity these days.

What it does have though is an excellent variable-speed trigger. There's no additional dial to restrict the top speed, it's all done via the trigger, which does require a more delicate touch in some materials, plastics for instance that can melt on higher speeds, but it's a light enough trigger to hold at a steady position during a cut if needed.

I found that being able to control it from zero through to its top speed of 3000 strokes per minute made it very manoeuvrable in curved work especially, making it easy to slow down and accelerate accordingly to regulate the cut.

The pendulum is the standard 3 on, 1 off



positions to suit the work and materials being cut, the usual lever type switch setting the variants.

### Conclusion

The saw is quite a compact boxy style, measuring 305mm in length with the battery in place, which I found makes it easy to control through a range of tasks, and with its heavy-duty construction, slim grip and tool-free adjustments it certainly hits the mark. Its price makes it top value.

It is a great all rounder with the capacities, attributes and performance of its mains counterpart.

### The **Good** Woodworking Verdict

+ Variable-speed trigger; tool-free base adjust; all-alloy front end; compact design  
– No worklight; no spring blade eject

**Rating** ★★★★★

**Typical price:** £340.00 With 2 x 4.0Ah batteries

**Made in** Czech Republic

**Battery:** 2x 18 volt 3.0Ah Li-ion

**Cuts per minute:** 0-3000

**Stroke Length:** 26mm

**Max cut wood:** 135mm

**Max cut metal:** 10mm

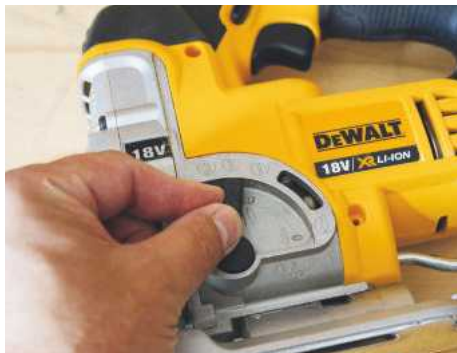
**Web:** www.dewalt.co.uk



▲ This large, easily operated flush-fitting lever releases the blades



▲ On the right-hand side of the jigsaw is the adjustable blower lever



▲ The left side of the body houses the pendulum lever



▲ The base can be tilted up to 45° by releasing this locking lever



▲ A jigsaw often earns its keep in kitchen fitting such as cutting out for sinks and hobs

# Kit & Tools

## Festool Carvex PSBC 420 EB-Plus Li 18



I guess you could say Festool is a little late to the party when it comes to battery machines as it has a somewhat limited range, but of course there are no half measures when they do arrive.

With an overall length of 290mm this one is pretty manoeuvrable, and if you are in the habit of inverting your jigsaw to cut from the underside of the work to keep the top face splinter free, the saw also has a double switching mode.

The standard trigger in the hoop handle has a variable-speed control within it, as well as a variable-speed dial to set a specific top speed to suit the material, although I have to say at the low end of the trigger where you may want to 'tickle' the start of a cut, there's no actual 'zero' speed; it kicks in at its set low speed of 1000 strokes per minute which is a tad disappointing.

For the inverted function a pair of slide switches is set perfectly for thumb operation in either hand but these automatically set the saw at its maximum speed for the position the speed dial is set to.

However, with the speed dial set to position 'A' the saw can be controlled at an idle speed and automatically hits full speed as soon as it engages

the work and comes under load, making it easier to initially set the saw to a cut line.

A set of four LEDs within the blade shaft housing illuminates the work area very brightly while also having a dual function of strobing once the speed hits top end, making the blade seem stationary. Again, this can prove useful if you are working intricate areas where you need to see the cut line, but with no blower control, the supplied extraction tube would be needed to gain the ultimate view when hooked up.

The strobe can also be switched off to have a standard illumination, or switched off completely by a sequence of switch activations. Invert the saw and it automatically shuts off the LED function as well.

blade into the retention collar and giving it a slight twist to lock it. The collar clicks into place to indicate the blade is securely held, and ejection is with a slider that operates the spring mechanism to eject the blade without having to touch it.

While this works flawlessly, the use of a plastic finger on the slider that operates the ejector collar looks to be the only area where I have reservations of durability.

To minimise blade drift Festool has included a similar set of guides to those found on the mains machine. This deep V shape can be nipped up with a hex key to keep thinner blades in check while allowing them to open up for a thicker blade, and Festool states in the manual that each blade swap should have the setting altered to ensure a consistent cut. It does a great job of keeping the cut in check, the deeper cuts I made all holding a good line, but as with any cutting task, blade selection plays an important part alongside this.

The saw is certainly a great performer and the slim bow handle is very comfortable if you have smaller hands, but if you are in the habit of working bevel cuts regularly, be prepared for an additional cost as the saw doesn't have a tilt base. Instead it comes with a standard 90° one that clips into place solidly and accurately, held with a large alloy clamping system that is quick to engage and disengage.

There is a set of bases available, either individually or as a kit in a Systainer, including a base for use on the Festool guide rail system that also doubles up as the link to the Core Maker circle-cutting guide. This clever attachment has an extendable coil to set the required circle diameter from 120mm up to 3000mm.

Also included are four flat 90° shoes for the standard base that are used for different materials, including one that takes felt pads for cutting very fine polished work, plus some anti-splinter inserts for veneered stock and the like, but it's the bevel-cutting base that catches the eye.



▲ The hoop handle has a variable-speed trigger for normal work



▲ Alternatively there are left and right sliders for inverted cutting operations



▲ At the rear of the saw is the speed dial. The 'A' position sets the 'idle' function



▲ This lever releases the clamps that hold the base in position

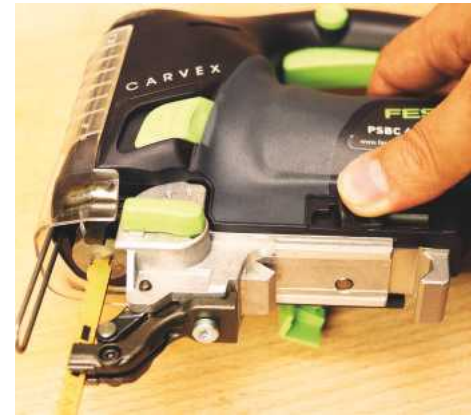




▲ The base comes away quickly and easily for changeovers



▲ A set of adjustable lower guide blocks gives extra support and minimises drift



▲ This slider ejects the blade but the plastic finger could be a weak point



▲ The alloy shoe has slide-off scratch plates for different surfaces



▲ A variety of different plates is available



▲ Any bevel cuts are made with adjustments to this clever piece of kit



▲ It can be set to wrap around a corner up to 90°...



▲ ...or set to work the other way to sit into a rebate or cut to a straightedge



▲ This base doubles up as the circle-cutting guide or it will fit to a guide rail

## Bevel-cutting base

It has a central hinge and rack-and-pinion movement so it automatically bisects any angle from 90° in both the acute and obtuse positions, giving a 180° range that is ideal not only for general bevel work but for sitting into a rebate, wrapping around an edge or even on round stock.

The downside, however, is that this base alone costs £105.84, and that's an expensive outlay for cutting bevels. Its scope, however, makes it something to consider as part of the saw setup. A far better option is to buy the set of bases in the Systainer as this is quite a saving over individual items.

The saw itself seems good value against the other saws but it only comes with a single

battery so you have to reflect that as well if you are weighing it up as a potential purchase.

## Conclusion

While the Festool range of battery tools may be limited in comparison with other manufacturers, they've concentrated on the core woodworking products required for cutting, drilling and planing, and this saw, despite the cost when you factor in the additional base, holds its own very well against the rest, but a true-zero variable-speed trigger would gain it extra kudos.

Although a pricy machine, especially as it only comes with one battery, the quality of the saw, its performance and its available bases continue to fly the flag high for Festool.

## Good The Woodworking Verdict

- + Dual-switch operations; great cutting performance; neat base options; strobing worklight
- Only 1 battery; bases expensive addition; plastic blade eject finger

**Rating** ★★★★★

**Typical price:** £442.80 with 1 x 4.2Ah battery

**Stroke rate:** 1000-3800 min-1

**Pendulum:** 4 stage

**Cutting depth in wood:** 120mm

**Cutting depth in steel:** 10mm

**Li-ion battery:** 18V 4.2 Ah x1

**Weight** 2.4kg

**Web:** www.festool.co.uk

## Hitachi CJ 18DSL



**T**his saw comes with two stonkingly good 5.0Ah batteries which not only add no more weight to the saw than smaller-capacity ones, but are compatible with the 3 and 4Ah batteries in the Hitachi range as well. Charge time is 75 minutes, but like all lithium-ion batteries, you can grab it off the charger at any time to get you by without any detrimental effect. With two batteries, unless you are cutting in an extensive situation, you would be hard pushed to run one down before the second was fully charged. Additionally, there's a 3-year warranty on the batteries as well as the saw.

### Much like mains

The saw is like the mains model. The 150 x 66mm base is plated alloy for durability and has clean straight edges to follow a guide batten if needed. It sits slightly behind the front of the saw, and with the pendulum sitting well forwards on the saw, you can cut almost flush to a vertical surface. To compensate, the bearing surface in front of the blade is very small so positioning to a mark can be tricky.

The base adjusts with a hex wrench with an indented setting for the 90° position. Bevel cuts need the base slid forwards so it will stick in front of the saw by about 15mm, limiting the close to flush cut feature to the 90° position.

The trigger is variable speed and pretty responsive at the lower end where you need it

most, only kicking into top speed about halfway through the trigger range.

The trigger also operates an LED light that is tucked up inside the saw alongside the blade shaft, ensuring a good view of your layout or cut lines, and although the saw has no switchable dust blower facility it seems to have one built in as it cleans dust away efficiently as you work.

On deeper material it gave a pretty rough ride with noticeable drift, though working sheet and worktop stock the cuts were decent enough, but the pendulum is pretty aggressive and left a rougher cut line than the other saws.

The blade is retained and released via a lever, but there's no collar to secure it; instead a clamping plate nips the sides of the blade rather than locking around the bayonet shank. It seems to work well enough but the saw had to be shaken occasionally to drop the blade out as it has no spring eject – not what you want with a hot blade.

### Conclusion

Blade retention apart this is a very competent saw with big capacities if a little basic in the odd area, and offers plenty of power and performance, equal to those of a mains machine. The bargain saw of the bunch, it handles the basics well enough but can be less satisfying on deeper work

### Good The Woodworking Verdict

- + Big battery capacity; close cutting to vertical surfaces; good variable-speed trigger
- Rough cut on high pendulum setting; some drift on deeper cuts

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: £300.00 with 2 x 4.0Ah batteries

Speeds: 0-2400spm

Cut capacity wood: 135mm

Cut capacity steel: 10mm

Length with battery: 277mm

Battery: 2 x 18V 5.0Ah Li-ion

Battery charge time: 75min

Weight: 2.4kg

Web: www.hitachi.co.uk



▲ The blade is secured into the shaft with a clamping action



▲ Once in place it seems very secure



▲ The eject lever unlocks the clamp but you have to shake the blade loose



▲ A trigger-activated LED gives good vision around the work area



▲ Base adjustment is with a hex key, sliding the base forward to set angles



▲ Set at an angle the base sticks beyond the front of the saw...



# Makita DJV182

**M**akita boasts a long-established jigsaw in the DJV180. However, the new kid on the block is the brushless version, and it's available as the hoop handled DJV182 here or as a body-grip model. The benefit of brushless allows a smaller tool while still hitting good performance figures, 135mm in timber for instance is equal to other, physically bigger saws in the test.

It also gains more runtime from the battery as well as fewer maintenance issues over time, plus it's compatible with other battery sizes. It comes with 4.0Ah units, and despite the high capacity, will charge in a superb 36 minutes.

But it does have a couple of oddities that for me don't make it as user friendly as the other saws on test. Like the Festool it idles at its lower speed before gaining its working speed once it engages the work. It has to be set to one of the top three speed settings to operate this function, and I found this took some getting used to.

However, unlike the Festool there's no actual variable speed within the trigger once the cut is in progress either; you have to set the speed with the dial at the back of the saw and go with it.

I found this made it more difficult to control a cut, and less intuitive.

## Saw operation

Operation setup is odd too. Where other manufacturers isolate the saw with a simple button within the trigger, Makita provides an

unlocking button. It lights up the LED that illuminates the work area to show it's now in standby mode and ready for action, allowing the trigger to be used.

It has a built-in auto lock function within it as well, so if the saw isn't used for anything over ten seconds it automatically locks meaning you have to go through the cycle of button pressing to operate it again. Despite the excellent performance of the saw, I found this frustrating.

Blade changing is tool free, like the others a lever engaging the locking collar to secure the blade in a spring-loaded operation that keeps you safely away from hot blades.

The lever itself is a smoky translucent plastic, which is a weak point for me, but it does the job.

The rest of the front end around the blade shaft is alloy and looks durable, while just to the left is the standard pendulum switch.

There's no switchable blower on the saw though, but it does have an automatic built-in one that works well.



## Conclusion

Despite the advantage of the brushless motor, Makita seems to have lost its way a little with this saw; the intuitive and tactile nature of a jigsaw seems to have been overlooked in favour of a function that doesn't really do it any favours, well, at least not for me anyway.

## Good The Woodworking Verdict

- + Brushless motor; fast battery charge time; compact
- No variable-speed trigger; frustrating button trigger lock; plastic blade eject lever

**Rating** ★★★★★

**Typical price:** £450.00 with 2 x 4.0Ah batteries

**Charge time:** 36min

**Battery:** 18v Li-ion 4.0Ah

**Max cut in steel:** 10mm

**Max cut in timber:** 135mm

**Speeds:** 800-3500spm

**Stroke length:** 26mm

**Weight:** 2.6kg

**Web:** www.makitauk.com



▲ You need to press this button to unlock the saw before it can be used



▲ The worklight LED illuminates to indicate the saw is ready for use



▲ Speeds are adjusted using the dial at the rear of the saw



▲ Fitting the blade is very easy; you push it directly into the slot



▲ Once it is in position the collar wraps around the shank automatically



▲ The blade is ejected using the plastic front lever



▲ Base tilts are set with the supplied on-board hex wrench

# Kit & Tools

## Metabo STA18LTX



**M**etabo isn't as prominent in the UK marketplace as it should be considering its extensive quality range of battery tools including this jigsaw, although like some of the others in this roundup, it has highs and lows within its make-up.

It certainly cannot be faulted on performance; it has loads of power and the punchiest of all the batteries at a monster 5.2Ah. If you work thicker stock regularly where you need longer run times, these are winners. Of course, higher amp hours means longer charge times so there is a trade off, but Metabo offers a fast charger option alongside the supplied model so you can bring this down if you think you need to do so. The batteries are 3-year guaranteed along with the saw, and the machine will take any of the current 18V Li-ion slide-on packs in different amp-hour ratings.

### Solidly built

The saw is solidly built, with a square, boxy body and alloy front end. This alloy area includes the excellent large blade retention lever, again in alloy so it looks very durable. It works very slickly and easily; you have to operate it to rotate the retention collar through 90° to allow the blade to slide in; the wrap around the shank is released to secure it. I noticed that the collar doesn't return right the way back to its start position once the blade is in place, but it still secures

perfectly. The blade eject is also spring loaded for safety.

There's a trigger-activated LED alongside the 4-stage pendulum as well as a switchable blower function to give a good view of the work area. While the switches for the pendulum and blower work freely enough, they do look cheap against the quality construction used on the rest of the saw.

This reservation, however, is counteracted by the great variable-speed trigger that can be easily held at a constant rate to control the start of a cut before accelerating away as needed.

The 145mm x 65mm alloy base has a steel insert for durability in general use and also comes with a plastic clip-on shoe for delicate surfaces.

Base adjustment is basic; an on-board hex key is needed to set any angle, with only the 90° position indented, but the design makes it easy to set to common angles etched on the base and it secures firmly at any setting.

### Conclusion

At 290mm long it's certainly a compact enough machine so will work well in any situation, and not overly weighty at 2.8kg. It's a nice drive and has lots of guts for deeper work as well as general day-to-day tasks. Although it has basic base adjustment, this machine hits the spot with its performance and front-end build, plus massive battery capacity.

### Good The Woodworking Verdict

- + Good blade holder; compact design; 5.2Ah batteries
- Hex key base adjustment; blower/pendulum levers look cheap

**Rating** ★★★★★

**Typical price:** £39.00 with 2 x 5.2Ah batteries

**Max cut in timber:** 135mm

**Max cut in steel:** 10mm

**Saw blade stroke:** 25.4mm

**Strokes in idle:** 0-2,700/min

**Weight:** 2.8kg

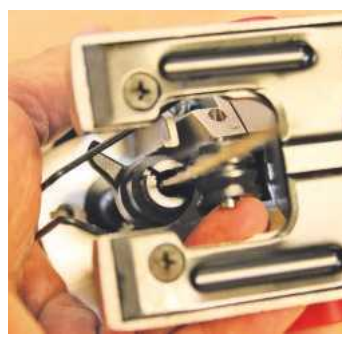
**Web:** www.metabo.co.uk



▲ An alloy front lever operates the blade swap function



▲ You have to operate the lever to align the slot to allow the blade to slide in



▲ Once in position the collar locks around the shank to retain it securely



▲ The lever for the pendulum action looks a little cheap but works perfectly



▲ The blower switch is similarly cheap looking and is a simple on-off function



▲ The edge of the base aligns to the etched markings for setting to common angles

## Milwaukee HD18 JSB-402C

**D**espite what the website says it appears only the body-grip design is currently available in the UK. That apart, the HD18 JSB is a well-specced and solidly built machine that boasts some great features, but it does have a long body – a whopping 360mm with the battery in place – which can make it difficult to manoeuvre and turn in tighter spots, as when cutting sink and hob openings. Generally though, it does its job admirably.

This machine is not overly huge, but can feel a bit unwieldy on finer cuts especially although using the knob on the top helps control it.

It follows the same trait as other body grips – no variable-speed control from the trigger. A slider switch is mounted on top of the body, easily accessible with either hand.

There's no actual variable speed either, but it does have a 2-speed function, operated with a touch button at the back. This illuminates to indicate the slower speed and retains the last setting, even after the saw is switched off. It's a handy setting in the slower speed when starting a cut or to control it around a curved cut, and the speed is easily altered while you work.

### Fixtec technology

Milwaukee uses Fixtec as its buzzword for tool-free operation, with two main features coming under the remit. First off, the now standard tool-free blade retention – does anyone make a hex key type anymore? You



have to operate the lever to fit the blade as the collar needs to be aligned to allow the shank to slide in. It's not as slick as the push-fit types but it does ensure the blade is always held securely, plus the blade still ejects automatically once the lever is engaged.

The second Fixtec function is the base adjustment; a long lever releases the clamping action making it very fast to set a bevel cut.

There's indented settings for 45° left and right as well as the 90° position, with all other

settings locking firmly as needed, plus there is adjustment to nip the setting if it starts to slacken off over time.

A dust blower is a must-have if you don't have extraction facilities and the Milwaukee has an adjustable one so you can control just how much dust you want to remove from the work area; however, I found it just didn't do its job no matter what position I set it on, which was certainly a big let-down.

### Conclusion

If you want build quality first and foremost, then Milwaukee has come up trumps here; the front end alloy construction along with the 164 x 70mm alloy and steel insert plate base show class and in use it's backed up, the front end weight helping to keep it settled on the work. While the length is always an issue, if you are after a body grip design, this one is worth a look despite a niggle along the way.

### Good The Woodworking Verdict

+ Tool-free base adjustment; good build quality  
– No variable speed; inefficient dust blower

**Rating** ★★★★★

**Typical price:** £450.00 with 2 x 4.0Ah batteries

**Max cut timber:** 120mm

**Max cut steel:** 10mm

**Speeds:** 2050/2700spm

**Stroke length:** 26mm

**Weight with battery:** 2.9kg

**Web:** [www.uk.milwaukeetool.eu](http://www.uk.milwaukeetool.eu)



▲ This button alters the jigsaw's speed; two speeds are available



▲ A top-mounted power slider is easily accessible for left- or right-hand operation



▲ The blower function can be altered using this dial



▲ The blade collar is set across the shaft when the blade isn't in place



▲ You have to operate the lever to align the collar and fit the blade



▲ Once fitted the collar wraps around the shank to lock it in place



# BEST BUYS

DeWalt takes the top spot but, as you might expect for its high price, the Festool does a grand job with the versatility expected of this brand



DeWalt takes battle honours



The Festool carries a raft of excellent features, but it is pricey

**F**inding a winner amongst the diversity is certainly tricky! You'll note that no single machine earns my coveted Five Star

Award. Festool has undoubtedly come up with the goods with the gamut of features and base options, but the price is high if all you need is a saw that has a tilting base and good controllability.

The best bases in this respect are the Milwaukee and the DeWalt, both offering fast lever adjustment, but the DeWalt wins that battle as the squat compact design allows more diversity in the cut, but both have top-end build quality, particularly the good alloy blade retention levers, these being found on the Metabo too.

Concerns in this area are the Makita and Hitachi, both having plastic levers, but the Festool uses a plastic finger to push the retention collar around to eject the blade,

which could equally be a perceived weak spot.

The Bosch blade holder is very good but maybe a tad fiddly to get at if you have big fingers or maybe suffer some finger-related ailments, but does work very well at retaining and ejecting the blade.

### Blade retention systems

Only DeWalt and Hitachi use a different retention system, both employing a clamp, but of the two I have to say the DeWalt looks to be the better, although they both hold the blade securely once in place.

The downside of course is no spring eject so there may be the need to touch a hot blade if it won't shake free.

In the case of the DeWalt, that's a small price to pay as its other attributes more than make up for it.

It lacks a worklight as well, but for overall performance, ease of use and build quality, it takes top spot.

Of the other saws, Festool has to be up there with its raft of options both on the saw as well as the bases, but it's a high cost factor to do the basic work the others do with their built-in tilt bases. That said, they don't do the tilt cutting anywhere near as well or with such adjustments; it's a purchaser decision of how you use a jigsaw as to whether you go down this route in this respect.

Metabo and Bosch are somewhat basic in comparison but deserve recognition as they are excellent performers if a little rudimentary when it comes to adjustment of the base.



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Depending on which newspaper you read, you may have seen the recent obituary for Hans Lobenhoffer, who died in September. He's best known, perhaps, as a climber, having been part of the German Himalayan expedition of 1939 that was led by the Austrian, Heinrich Harrer. The outbreak of war led to the internment of the team, and various Boys' Own escape attempts; but while Harrer eventually succeeded in making his way to Tibet – where his experiences provided the substance of the book *Seven Years in Tibet* – Lobenhoffer remained in captivity. There, I was intrigued to learn...

Dave Roberts, Consultant Editor

## Hearts of oak and a head for chipboard

...that he took up carpentry, so his time behind the wire wasn't wholly wasted. This woodworking interest clearly informed in some way his subsequent career as an engineer since he entered the chipboard industry: according to Lobenhoffer's obituary, he not only filed a number of patents relating to the more efficient manufacture of higher-quality boards – natürlich, as those orderly Austrians say – but also built and ran a chipboard factory in Ireland in the immediate post-war years. I doubt that Brad Pitt will be as keen to star in a film about making a useful product by gluing together wood waste as he was to film the story of Harrer's life in Tibet, but it's always fascinating to know that even the most humble-seeming of woodie products have distinguished associations, and – in this season of remembrance – that some good things do come out of war.

### The character of wood...

Actually, to describe wartime adventures such as those of Harrer and Lobenhoffer as 'the stuff of Boys' Own' really does a disservice to the strength of character that must have underlain so many of those exploits. And from this thought my oddly wired imagination draws a parallel with bog oak (p52): if ever a timber was in need of a new name to better reflect its qualities, it's this one: 'bog oak' – a loose generic term covering similarly preserved timbers that can be found in other countries – really doesn't do much to create as meaningful an impression as, say, the 'Fenland black oak' moniker adopted by Hamish Low. This not only describes at a factual level the source, species, and appearance of the timber, but also conjures a sense of the tremendous character of the sub-fossilised trees, which emerge by ones and twos from the East Anglian lowlands,

a region whose history and horizons and distances have about them, even in our modern times, an alluring air of darkness and mystery.

### ...and of woodworkers

In a way, there's a touch of Fenland black oak's character – its straight-grainedness and durability, perhaps? – in the timber's *de facto* champion, Hamish Low, whose estimation of craftsmen may be instructive to those out there who aspire to professionalism in their cabinetmaking: "People think craftsmen are patient," he says, "but the best craftsmen I've worked with are ferociously intolerant; they're intolerant of their own inabilities, and really intolerant of other people's. And I'm like that, too; it's just in my nature to get completely absorbed in something and just get on with it, and everything else is a distraction." Besides this focus, the difference between the amateur and the professional, Hamish reckons, is revealed by the speed with which they can produce a quality result. Anyone can produce a well-made chair given enough time, he maintains, "but there is an aesthetic to things that are made well quickly; a crispness and cleanliness." As an example of this accomplished economy, he cites someone whom he calls the furniture-maker's furniture-maker, George Taylor, who recommended, for example, that dovetails shouldn't be dry-tested but just assembled – a sure way, I suppose, to achieve either that crisp aesthetic, or the opportunity for reflection and self-improvement!

### Small-scale conversion

Hamish, as you'll have gathered if you've already read the article, also has some fairly definite views on the appreciation and better use of our native hardwoods. However, as



Hans Lobenhoffer in the Himalayas in 1939



Pic.1 Andy King at work on the bandsaw, lopping big lumps off my bits of holly...



Pic.2 ...before using an MDF board to stabilise the log on the table and run against the fence to create the first flat side...



Pic.3 ...to which the board is tacked in order to guide the log while the second face is cut



Pic.4 Now you have two square faces bearing on the table and the fence; the King squint is optional but strikes fear into timber

proof of the barrier that the cost of milling poses to individuals wishing to convert the odd tree here and there, I still haven't come up with the cash to saw the 20ft of oak trunk brought down in the gales back when GW276 was just a .pdf file in the printer's eye.

In the interests of experimentation, however, I have spent a little time thinking about converting another of this year's casualties, a contorted willow. Terry Porter's bible, *Wood Identification & Use*, tells me that willow works easily, glues well, and can be brought to a high finish, so it might be worth resawing the trunk into a handful of 10mm-thick boards and seeing what it looks like.

Just what sort of show the sawn willow does put on will depend, I suppose, in part on how it's cut – through-and-through is probably the sensible way to go – though I don't know whether it's pale and generally straight grain ever offers much excitement. Either way, though, the first problem is to stop the log rolling on the saw table. The solution to this was provided by Andy K a few years ago when he converted some holly for me using a bandsaw – short of going into double deep-ripping, he explained, bandsaws are preferable for this sort of job because they'll cut larger sections of timber than tablesaws of the size found in cabinetmakers' workshops, and the width of their blades also makes for less waste.

Our first step with the holly, then, was to clean up the logs (**Pic.1**) to produce reasonably straight sections that we could mount on a sled, a simple MDF board screwed to each log (**Pic.2**), to hold them steady while they were passed through the saw. If you're resawing larger sections, Andy pointed out, you may find that the drag of the bandsaw blade will still try to roll the timber over, in which case it'd pay to build yourself a hod-like right-angled cradle whose faces will lie flat against both the table and the fence, and through which more screws can be run to hold the log securely.

The first pass through the saw produced a flat face that was then laid on the sled and screwed into place, and a second pass made which gave us another flat face perpendicular to the first (**Pic.3**). With two square faces to address the table and fence, the log was ready for resawing (**Pic.4**), during which the screw holes left by this initial squaring up process were cut away with the outermost boards, which were of little use. If you're working with something more valuable, of course, you could always devise a way of clamping the log to the sled instead.

What will I use the willow for? Traditionally it's been used to make cricket bats and artificial limbs, but if it's any good I'll probably stick to a spot of box-making or detailing. I wonder, though, what Hans Lobenhoffer would've made of it when he was carpentering away in the PoW camp in Dehradun?

# Playing away

**Stephen Simmons** passes on tips for when you are working away from the workshop

**O**ne of the pleasures of having your own workshop is that you know exactly where everything is, no matter how chaotic it may look to the outsider. The ability to put your hand on whatever you want without thinking is an under-rated but significant confidence booster. But what happens when you have to leave the security of your den and work on site?

Some people have no option and I have great admiration for those plumbers and electricians whose vans seem models of organisation – but then, their vans are their workshops. I've always hated it and experienced a sense of unease which may say more about me than working on site does itself.

There are three main reasons for restoring on site: size, weight and mobility. Some pieces are too big to be moved: they won't fit into either your vehicle or workshop. Victorian dining tables often fall into this category, but some pieces are modular and can be split. Others, such as pianos, are too heavy. The more common reason is that some things just can't be moved, such as built-in cupboards, banisters, doors and door-cases, and plaster cherubs on the ceiling. You may not get asked to gild too many cherubs but requests from relatives and friends to work on any of the others are realistic possibilities.

## Preparation and planning

So if the call comes, what do you do? There are two separate aspects: preparation beforehand and working once on site. You must think



▲ Some jobs, like this chemist's dispensary, are too difficult to move...

◀ ...but they were often built in sections which can be dealt with separately...

ahead and plan in detail. Break the job down and make lists of materials, tools and equipment for each stage so that you know what to take. Include all eventualities and don't be surprised when the list seems to get out of control.

Although it's less important when you're only working next door, it can be a complete time waster and utterly frustrating if you've forgotten something when working further afield. Something like veneering can turn into a logistical nightmare well before you arrive on site and it's at this stage when you might begin to have second thoughts.

You also have to be aware that working on

site can be disproportionately time-consuming. As a hobbyist you won't be costing your time but you still need to plan it realistically. Take re-French polishing a dining table for example: you may be able to do the stripping and neutralising in a single two or three hour session but after that you'll need to make several much shorter visits over several days to finish the job. There's no scope for hurrying the process without making a sticky mess.

On other jobs you may only be able to work for as little as 15 minutes before leaving it for a couple of hours or overnight with nothing else to do. Leaving a repair in clamps for the glue to cure before going to the next stage is common. In your own workshop you can move on to something else in the meantime but this is not necessarily so on site. Working on site is sequential on one project rather than in parallel on two or more in the workshop which means a lot of dead time.

## Children and animals

Forward planning may cause a bit of head-scratching but that is the easy bit. My biggest

## TIP

This is not so much an optional tip as an essential: as well as taking all reasonable precautions against damage, be meticulous in tidying up afterwards. Sweep and dust and put all displaced items of furniture back in place.

fear was always getting stain on the carpet but the trickiest problem often lay elsewhere. WC Fields' advice to actors about never appearing with children or animals applies equally to on-site restorers. They don't steal the limelight but they do get in the way. However, the adult of the human species can be the real problem and I've experienced the best and worst sides of human nature. Working for friends and relatives should be easier.

On-site restoration techniques themselves are essentially the same as in the workshop but you may find yourself working at odd angles in which case you will have to modify standard practice as you go along. French polishing on the vertical rather than horizontal and scabbling round on your knees rather than standing at the bench both demand some imagination, as well as the use of unaccustomed sets of muscles, so take something to kneel on.

However, the biggest difference in working practice is in damage limitation. Think what can go wrong. Spillage in the workshop is not the end of the world but it's a different matter in somebody's living room. Staining their carpet must be avoided at all costs. Ordinary dry waste such as a bit of sawdust or a few wood shavings pose little threat and nothing that dust sheets and some vacuuming won't put right, but the real threat comes from liquid polishes and stains, solvents and fine powders such as earth pigments, vegetable black in particular.



▲ ...but with other jobs you have no choice

Proprietary stripper falls into the same risky category as does the potentially messy use of a heated glue pot for veneering with animal glue. For all these everyday restoration materials dust sheets alone are not sufficient: impervious heavy-duty plastic sheeting is essential. Better still is the rubber/plastic-backed fabric for kitchen table covering that you can buy in rolls – it's far more robust. Spread it out to protect the whole working area – and under the work itself if possible. I always use it on top of ordinary dust sheets.

## Belt and braces

If the job involves French polishing you'll have to ask for a minimum temperature of 16°C in the room otherwise the polish will bloom. And then there's the whole issue of labelling all anonymous bottles clearly and what to do with anything risky overnight. I always bundled questionable items into a plastic box and brought them away with me every day.

Accidents do happen, so think belt and braces, or should I say big plastic box or its close relative, the cat litter tray. The box is better than the tray because of its higher sides. Keep all dangerous materials in it so if a bottle falls over the stain, polish or stripper is contained. And do work with the box or tray on the plastic sheeting... then you can be sure that you have taken all reasonable precautions. Although prevention is best, don't forget to take lots of rags...



▲ Stripping and cleaning on site can be messy but is far easier than cabinet work and structural repair

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▲ Pic.1 Michael's old and well-used shooting board

# Take aim, shoot!

This month **Michael Huntley** shows you how to make that useful planing aid, a shooting board

**W**e have been using saws, chisels and planes but there is a workshop-made item that can make your planing very much easier – a shooting board. The term 'shooting' refers to the act of planing an edge to flat and square. If you use stationary machines then these should give you square edges, but most people starting off use hand tools in the shed or garage where there is no room for machines. So you need to know how to shoot an edge,

indeed you probably need to shoot four edges on every piece of timber you use. That is a lot of shooting so make yourself a shooting board. There are designs all over the internet but this is an easy and simple one that I suggest to my students.

My old shooting board is much worn but still used (Pic.1). The bigger it is the better because you can handle larger boards and timbers but big also means heavy and hard to store so I am going to make a smaller one this time.

I am using MDF for the base. Now, I don't like MDF because it is not natural, it has no character and the dust is bad for you. However, there are times when a dead flat surface with no character is useful. This is one of them. This offcut has been hanging around in my workshop for years and I am glad to use it up, but if I had to buy in board I would have bought multi-ply which doesn't use as many chemicals in the manufacture and is at least vaguely wood-like in appearance.



▲ Pic.2 Cutting the MDF base: Michael's not keen on MDF but it does the job – for an easy planing technique follow Pics.3-6 over page



▲ Pic.7 Mark the position carefully...



▲ Pic.8...and apply glue between the lines; make sure the whole surface is covered



▲ Pic.9 Place the top board in position and weigh it down with every heavy object you have; make sure it doesn't slide out of position

If you are cutting for more than a couple of minutes using machines that produce fine dust then wear a mask.

## Cutting MDF

I am using a jigsaw to cut the MDF (**Pic.2**) but a panel saw will do. This highlights the problem of what saw to go for when doing initial cuts in timber. A jigsaw with a fresh blade run against a batten or clamp guide is one solution. A panel saw is another. Up to now we have used tenon saws but they have a spine and cannot cut through a wide board or deep timber. If you don't have a jigsaw – and let's face it, a jigsaw is only used for rough cutting sheet material – then invest in a throw-away panel saw.

Once again I wouldn't normally recommend buying cheap tools but there are some situations when you don't need a fine tool. A good panel saw will cost you £80 and it is a lovely and worthwhile buy, but for rough cutting MDF and ply you can use a £10 plastic-handled saw.



▲ Pic.10 Use a saw to make a slight dust groove at the junction between the two boards



Pic.11 Clamp, check right angle with two squares and tap to make adjustments



Pic.12 Screw the fence in place with as many screws as will fit

## Planing MDF



▲ Pic.3 Truing MDF by hand plane: note the left-hand position



▲ Pic.4 Tidy up furry edges by chamfering freehand; this is good practice at freehand work



▲ Pic.5 The corners will need to be smoothed with abrasive paper from the outside towards the centre



▲ Pic.6 Cleaning the mouth of the plane; MDF swarf is a real nuisance



Pic.13 Mark the edge of the fence with a square

The baseboard is 25mm MDF and the top board 13mm MDF. This is cut to the same length but slightly less wide in order to leave a runway for the plane to travel along (Pics.16 & 17, see panel Planing just got easier). The runway needs to be about 6in wide. Try it out with your plane and see what works; it may be that you want to create a smaller board than mine if you only have a small workshop. I am adding a slight variation to mine. I use Japanese planes as well as Western ones so am leaving a small runway on the opposite side so that this board can be used for 'pull' planes as well as 'push' ones (Pic.18, also see panel Planing just got easier).

Once the top board is cut – and try to use the machined edges if possible, otherwise you may have to trim your edges by hand (Pic.3, see panel Planing MDF) – the top can be glued down.

### Gluing up

When marking up remember that if you are left-handed you will want your runway on the opposite side to me! Take a lot of care to make sure that all the edges are square and parallel

Plane the edge as shown (Pic.3). My left hand is guiding the plane and acting as a fence to keep the plane level. The fingers are curled against the sole of the plane. This is fine for MDF but you need to be a bit more careful with splintery timbers!

MDF leaves furry edges so relieve the edges by a slight freehand chamfer (Pic.4). This is good practice for freehand shaping, but you won't be able to clean up the corners easily by plane. Use abrasive paper for this (Pic.5). Work from the outside in towards the centre.

Your plane will get clogged up with MDF swarf. Use a brush to remove it (Pic.6). Don't take the plane apart and spend time re-setting it.





Pic.14 Cut the fence leaving the pencil line in the waste

with each other. Mark the baseboard (Pic.7) and apply lots of glue (Pic.8).

Glue needs to be spread evenly and thickly enough to wet the surface, but not so thick that you get lots of squeeze out. It won't matter on this project but later on you will find that squeeze out hinders polishing because the glue acts as an unwanted size. Make sure you get sufficient glue right up to the pencil lines. Apply the top board and weight down (Pic.9).

When it is dry you can make a little dust groove (Pic.10). This makes it easier to register the plane because it is vital that the plane body is tight against the side of the top board.

## Fitting the fence

The final step is to fix a fence at right angles to the runway (Pic.11). It is most important that it is at exactly 90°. Clamp it roughly in position using the fixed arm of the clamp against the fence. Check its position using two squares or

one very trusted large square and tap with a hammer to make adjustments. Tapping is much more accurate than moving by hand.

Then screw down (Pic.12). It is best not to glue the fence in case it needs to be moved. Put in more screws than you think you need, then carefully mark the fence to fit the top board (Pic.13) and cut it (Pic.14). Finally screw a batten on the underside to stop the board from sliding across the bench as you plane (Pic.15).

Clean up all edges and you have a right-angle planing board or shooting board. You could of course use the same idea for a 45° board for shooting mitres. A few simple adjustments would allow you to shoot mitres in height as well as width. Google 'mitre trap' and you will find one on Berin's Blog.

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Pic.15 Finally fit a batten to the underside

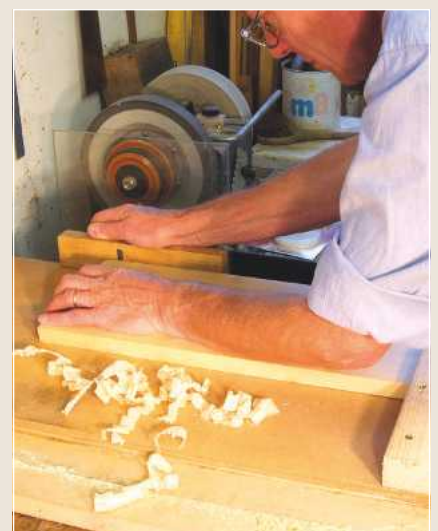
## Planing just got easier



▲ Pic.16 How the new board is used



▲ Pic.17 Close up of the grip used to hold the plane



▲ Pic.18 Using the board with a Japanese plane

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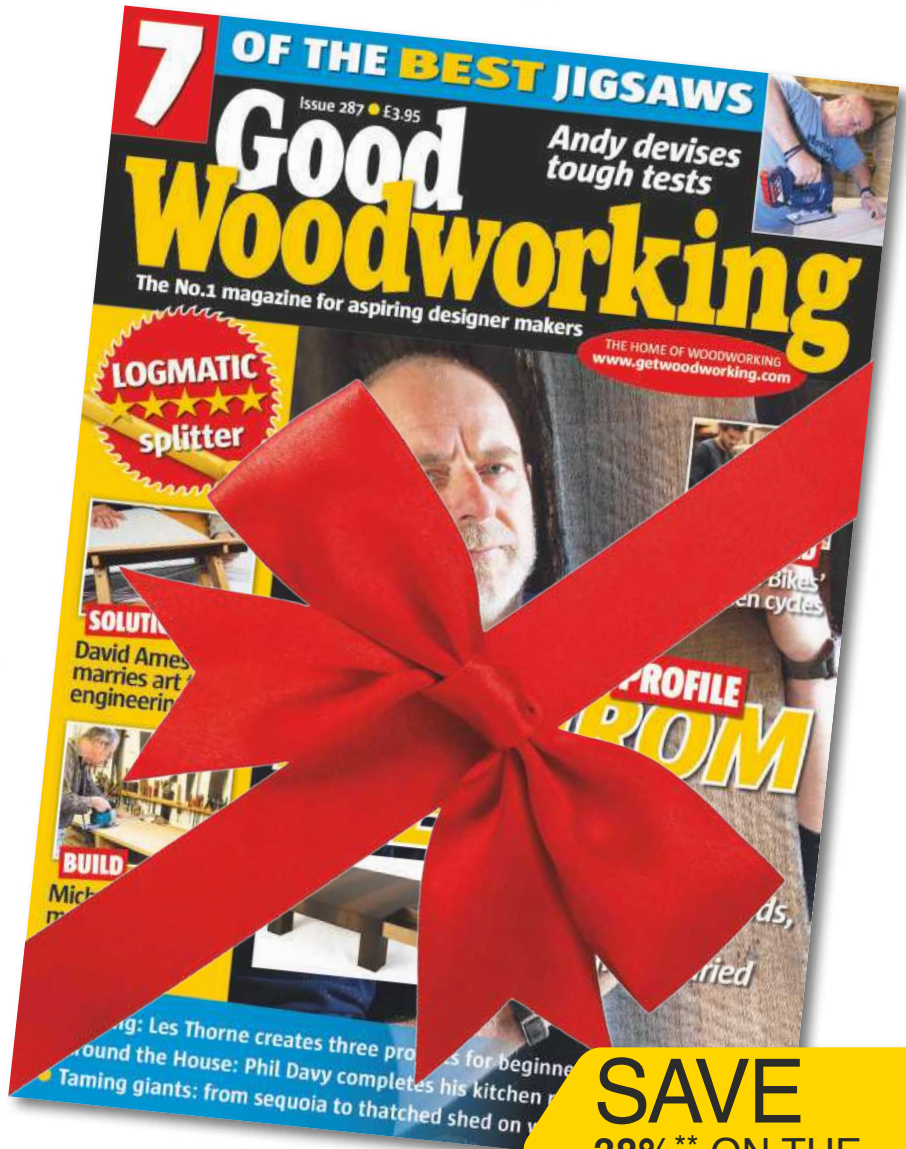
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Bough Bikes was founded by myself and Piet Brandjes in 2012. Thanks to the advanced computer-controlled milling machine, the company is able to produce wooden bikes in larger quantities while keeping them affordable and of consistent high quality.

I am a Dutch designer with a love of natural products. If you design from nature you will always create something that people feel comfortable with. My design stands out because of the combination of beauty, simplicity and functionality. I want to inspire people and bring them closer to nature through my designs. Wood is warm, flexible and solid at the same time. Wood is a live material. Every piece is different. The wooden product becomes more beautiful as the years go by. In addition, processing wood

takes considerably less energy than processing steel. The Bough Bike is made of oak from a sustainable forest in the Jura region of France. These woods are maintained under the principles of the Natura 2000 philosophy. Bough Bike's ambition is to use as many eco-friendly materials as possible. Bough Bikes believes that we are living in a transitional era that demands new solutions and out-of-the-box thinking. Our society is on its way to a beautiful future with more room for sincerity. Our wooden bicycles have been designed as city bikes for people who live life to the fullest. The oak frame absorbs vibration. You can leave the bike outdoors; the rain will not harm it. The standard bike is equipped with two speeds and changes gears automatically at 18 km/h.

**Jan Gunneweg**

[www.boughbikes.nl](http://www.boughbikes.nl)



The Bough Bike frame under construction is made from French oak





# Jack the giant slayer

Crispin Keyzar turns childhood fantasy into reality by creating his own thatched playhouse from a sequoia that he felled

## From chainsaw to finished product

When we met Crispin back in GW259 he had just felled the sequoia and was contemplating what he could make with some of it. We caught up with him a couple of years later and asked the question...



There is a current trend towards small living spaces, see George Clarke's channel 4 series *Amazing Spaces* for instance. I don't believe it's so much a mass fascination with size, as it is a renaissance into the exploration of simplicity. Something like the Beeb's *The Good Life*, though lacking nothing, full of individual creative expression and value for beauty in function

Although George Clarke's series was not the beginning for me, it did further spur my childhood dream, to build better dens.

Timber-frame buildings have always held a magic for me, stuffed full of peasants, princes, wolves and gingerbread. Not just this, but also using the craft to transform from tree to sanctuary, recreating, God like, to explode and reassemble, like the first Lego, but out of

necessity rather than play, but why not both?

Secondary school after all this bucolic bliss was like being misfired down a rifle barrel so I was glad to leave and eagerly seek the refuge of the woods where I worked as an under forester on an estate that was run on principles owing something to feudalism, managing the woods.

## Traditional apprenticeship

The work here was laborious, with ancient hand tools and totally dictated by an unwritten calendar passed down by the Silviculturalists of Wessex. I remember passing dark hours – as the rain of winter drove us to cover – setting and sharpening hand saws in the tool shed, a corner of the great tithe barn or filling the tops of walnuts in readiness for the nursery beds, hands sore and stained black from the harvest.



# Timber frame mobile den



The building is made from a tiny part of this giant sequoia, felled by Crispin

The giant is slain!



The milling machine works on overtime



Crispin is already thinking what he could make with one of these boards

Cotswold Tree Surgeons was Southern Forestry. This was charged with the management of the Bathurst Estate that bounded and included some of the Roman town of Cirencester. Occasionally I would be drafted to work alongside, planting hundreds of thousands of tiny trees at a time. I had done this before but nothing like this scale. This is where I saw my first real active sawmill.

Hailey Wood Saw Mill was a hive of noise, machines and business. It rather reminded me of a large wood ants' nest, alive with movement, piles of woody debris everywhere. I didn't acknowledge its effect on me but something had stuck.

It was only years later while trans-navigating the globe that the relevance of this sight would be brought home to me. I could work anywhere there were trees and people. Emigration to New Zealand introduced me to a pioneer people still with a mentality of large land clearance fresh in their history. Big trees and big space too: this really stretched and challenged me mentally and physically, having a very English and conservative approach to tree pruning. I was not to know that this was to further prepare me, like Jack, for giant killing.

Having completed my apprenticeship I was due to travel north to Forestry's prestigious Newton Rigg College of Forestry for a more modern education in this field. My time on the estate however, had turned me off this form of farming with trees and its seemingly monotonous calendar. I did not attend.

But through a friend from the Forestry Commission's Savernake beat, I was introduced to the world of arboriculture and started work nearby for Cotswold Tree Surgeons. I had landed well and truly on my feet, literally branch walking the skies of North Wiltshire and its surrounds. This had come for me when one day while feeding felled branch wood through

the monstrous chipper, I volunteered to set a felling line high in an old willow on the banks of some sleepy backwater of the Thames.

Tucking the rope into my belt and without so much as a helmet, I scrambled into the upper crown and hastily threw together a hideous granny knot.

## Human catapult

This free style impressed and catapulted me from the ground into the trees, where I soon had to wrestle with bulky and unfamiliar safety equipment, real knots and petrol-powered saws, a vertical learning curve.

A sister company, operating alongside

## First encounter

My first encounter with *Sequoia giganteum* was years earlier in the UK, in Trowbridge, Wiltshire for the tree surgeon Phil Goldsmith. It loomed

# Project



The basic frame is constructed on its trailer



Pegs, as seen in the roof trusses, hold the frame together



The floor takes shape

The back goes on...



up as ominous as Jack's beanstalk; we had to hire a 3-stage ladder just for me to reach the first branch. My mission was to reach the summit, inspecting the junctions, checking for cavities and dead-wooding on the way up.

Although the prospect of epic climbs to dead-wood and inspect was always a possibility if a rare and unusual one in the world of domestic tree surgery, I didn't ever think I would have to take down one of the giants from the west coast of America.

In the last three years I have dismantled seven of these colossi. My main stock-in-trade tool, the compact yet powerful Stihl ms0200t top-handled arborist's chainsaw, became somewhat obsolete.

In an odd sort of a way I have always likened the work of taking down Wellingtonia to that of the early whaling fleets. Silver nitrate pre-celluloid plates showed swarms of men carving the blubber in great chunks, the whales having been winched ashore with great steel ropes.

In terms of firearms you'd be thinking elephant gun, and with an average diameter at breast height of 8ft, the elephant gun in this case was the German Stihl ms880, 125cc of petrol-powered chainsaw, in this case with an effective bar length of 48in.

Like those majestic beasts of the deep these trees were to yield up tonnes of bounty, and I was determined to realise their hidden beauty. There was no precedent in arboriculture for converting timbers of any kind for anything other than firewood.

## Land force plea

The logistics alone of moving in excess of 30 tonnes of redwood meant a call to the land force, farmers, friends of mine and their

neighbours with their great Manitous, JCBs and Fords. In some cases not even these massive machines could muster the rip strength needed to lift an 8 x 8ft section and these had to be further broken down by running a 5ft bar, again on the ms880, along a Scandinavian Logosol rail in order to smoothly and accurately halve these lumps. The lumber loaded on bail trailers left in convoy to its new resting place. With my rented space at a local farmyard full to busting I was now the Redwood Baron.

The timing could have been more perfect. I was due to be moving to a new yard three miles or so away. I could not afford to move the whole lot again in the same way, but my lease was close to expiry and the farmer had a new barn planned for my current space. How to make it more portable with no cutting list, what to do with all this wood? No one in my woodie circles knew enough about the stuff to give me any solid direction.

The timber could be brittle but was super durable – 'the wood that never rots' according

to Redwood Classic – so cladding was the answer. Again I needed help as this was outside the scope of my Logosol M7 wood mill.

Martin Osborne, sawyer and mentor, was thankfully on hand with his WoodmizerLT70 bandsaw and we soon set about breaking down these baulks into 8in broad boards 1.5in thick. These we stacked in piles of roughly 33cu ft, ready to pass through a re-saw. Three dusty acrid pink days later all the larger butts were broken down and anything left in the round was a ton or under, suitable for a smaller Palfinger crane. It was time again for another big push.



...then the roofing boards



What could be more natural than field-grown roofing materials...

...on your roof?



The sides are on



Thatcher Paul Swannack does a very pretty job...



...and it looks pretty cosy on the inside too

Settled at my new yard, an old dairy building on a National Trust-owned estate and with all the re-sawing done, the sequoia had realised a glut of heavy-duty cladding (8in wide and with a taper from 1in to half an inch), for London's St Paul's. The race was on to move this mountain and pay for the huge outlay.

## Timber-frame house

It had always been my plan to set aside sufficient cladding and timber for my own modest experimental build, a transportable, demountable timber-frame house. Sequoia dries incredibly light, almost to that of balsa; this made it ideal for such a project. The irony was that there was so little left of the red giants, their timber having gone like hot cakes. I was now like Beatrix Potter's Tailor, scrimping for titbits from the scraps. It was now or never!

To illustrate the next chapter in this build I ask the reader to imagine one hand clapping, now one man barn-raising. Yes once again sometimes this solitary sport is unfeasibly difficult on your tod. Enter James Reed veteran timber framer and devotee of obscure digital radio stations. We began this build with no more solid plans than my many coffee-stained sketches and various publications by Lloyd Kahn, densely illustrated

and heavily pawed. This soft-cutting wood was a pleasure to work with chisels, mallets, hand saws and augers. Each beam was wonderfully stable as if in muscle memory to it's once bolt upright form. Offset pins pricked our tenons and once drilled, hand-cut 3/4in drawn oak pegs jointed firmly to shoulder.

With the frame complete it was a swift and satisfying clad to watertight, so how now to top it off? I didn't want the traditional sprig of oak but a whole heap of wheat straw masterfully applied by Paul Swannack of Wincanton, unusually for a thatcher young but no less expert for it.

And like the Marden sourced, Purdy straw, of a sunny disposition. It was a pleasure to watch as he fetched this redwood back into fairy tale realm with a golden top of thatch. Due to the success of this prototype I have had a number of commissions, to enable me to carry on my passion for building from trees.

## Next month...

...Michael Huntley reports on the timber frame construction of the new Shipwright's School workshop at Buckler's Hard, on the Beaulieu estate in Hampshire.





One of the fringe benefits of hunting bog oak is a woodstore full of winter calories!

**Dave Roberts** tells an almost Arthurian tale of Hamish Low, bog oak, and a once-mighty 5000-year-old tree whose time is coming again

# future oak

**W**hen it comes to bog oak – the amber-and-black brindled bounty from the peaty heart of the English fenlands – Hamish Low doesn't waste much time on the superficial judgment that is monetary worth: "I'm not interested in bog oak because it's old or rare; I'm interested because it's incredibly beautiful." To look into the depths of this timber – past the black-mercury gleam of the medullary rays in a quarter-sawn board and down to where time, pressure, and the reaction between mineralised waters and the wood's tannin have fixed and part-fossilised the figure of these once-massive oaks – is to glimpse a lost world.

More than 5000 years ago, after the last ice age but before rising sea levels choked the rivers that had previously drained the low-lying areas of England's eastern seaboard and so drowned them, the fens were forested by members of a now-vanished species of which

our modern oak is a hybridised descendant. To what heights their topmost branches reached is anyone's guess, though the rot-peppered remains of a specimen unearthed by Hamish had once been the trunk of a tree 58in in diameter, and which had risen, straight and branchless, for at least 115ft. Picture the canopy that must've topped a trunk like that and, as Hamish says with a shake of his head: "It makes you wonder what it would've been like for nomadic family groups wandering through forests of that grandeur; it must have been amazing.

## Fossilisation

"Of course," he adds, "the experts never talk about the trees [of that period], and the reason they don't talk about them is that there's so little evidence." When the rising waters eventually drowned and toppled the oaks, those that lay exposed simply rotted; only those that fell such that they buried or partly



buried themselves in the silt of the flooded forest floor were preserved by its anaerobic conditions. There, the normal mechanisms of decay were arrested and the process of fossilisation began, a process similar to that which, a little further up the coast and millions of years earlier, had turned wood into lignite, the 'mineraloid' commonly known as jet.

When the fens were drained a few centuries ago, and the rich soils that this created came under increasingly intensive cultivation, the blackened, sub-fossilised oaks began to be found by farmers' ploughs and hauled or even dynamited from their ancient beds in the East Anglian levels. For decades they've been stacked in hedgerow and headland where, decaying rapidly upon exposure to the air, they either disintegrate or – part-coal, part-peat that they are – are chopped up for firewood.

Together, this combing of the fields and the fact that only a finite number of prime specimens can have won the preservation lottery, have meant that bog oak – Fenland Black Oak if you prefer a more upbeat name – is now, Hamish reckons, "the most extreme example of the waste of our native hardwoods," for which there is, as yet, no managed approach. In the meantime, then, Hamish is doing what he can to track down and save this, the rarest of those native timbers. Bog oak, however, is a notoriously tricky beast to catch and domesticate.

**Prehistoric skin: there must be a use for something as characterful this dried bog oak bark**

**The great slices of chocolate-brown oak look almost edible, while the dust leaves a smell of peat in the air which, for some reason, suggests Ireland and Guinness!**

## Things can go horribly wrong

A quarter of a century of stalking bog oaks has taught Hamish that the best examples – those with broad, straight trunks – are to be found 4ft below present sea level. "Those trees," he says, "were perfect specimen oaks" – or at least they were perfect, carbon-dating tells him, between 4800-5500 years ago. Today, the trick lies in judging what happened immediately after they fell, because it's this that will have determined what their carcasses might offer up when they're sawn and dried. "And things can go horribly wrong during

drying," he says with a roll of eyes that have seen every kind of kilning catastrophe.

Consider the problem: a tree falls, and the lower half buries itself in the anaerobic silt, say. The upper half, however, remains exposed to the air and the elements so that it splits along the medullary vessels – like any fallen oak you might see today – and becomes overgrown with the bog-loving plants. In time, both halves become saturated, causing the upper part to swell and the splits to close. Five thousand years later, along comes Hamish, who's confronted with a saturated bog oak in the round that he transports, quarter-saws, sticks and dries.

During the nine months that the planks spend in the kiln, every cubic foot of timber will typically release four gallons of water: "You're removing about two-thirds of its volume" – one cubic foot equating to about 6.2 gallons – "so the timber shrinks to half its thickness and around one third or a quarter of its width." The planks from the underside of our hypothetical trunk may well be able slowly to change shape to this extent and remain split-free and flat. Those from the topside, however, will reveal the effects of the ancient splitting and rotting, possibly to the point of disintegration.

"I don't know any of this for a fact," Hamish admits, he's just applying some common sense to experience which has shown that it's possible for consecutive and seemingly similar planks to dry completely differently, his conclusion being that the saw cut which divided them coincided with a boundary between preservation and decay (see also Drying: kiln vs air).



September 2014, and Hamish's latest haul waits to be milled in the shade. Speed is of the essence to minimise the stresses caused by localised drying...



## The black and the amber

It's all far from being an exact science, so you can see why it's not easy to judge whether an oak is worth the trouble of recovering and processing, let alone how much useable timber it will yield when dry. If things go well, however – and the Jubilee oak (see below) is an example of things going spectacularly well – the timber turns from being soft and fragile into something that's stable and hard, and which works as beautifully as it is coloured.

“What everybody wants is the jet-black bog oak, but it's usually less dense,” perhaps because the colour change requires the presence of water-borne irons, which suggest

...which is where neighbouring farmers' help comes in handy with the heavy lifting

**Delicate duet: a pair of telehandlers loaned by local family firm ACF gently lift the Jubilee oak onto the 54ft-long bed of the Norwood mill**

Photograph: Character Communications



## Native woods: a long-term opportunity

“We have some of the best hardwoods in the world, I think – pippy yew, burr walnut, plum, ripple sycamore, olive ripple ash – but no-one is establishing plantations of them. Why aren't we doing that?”

There's no need, Hamish argues, for furniture-makers to contribute to deforestation of the Amazon basin or West Africa by using exotic timbers when we have – or could have – beautiful, home-grown alternatives. “Macassar ebony grows in a coastal region of one set of islands in the Indian Ocean; why do furniture-makers need to use it?” After all, it's not the exotics' density – the slow-grown reason for their rarity – that's valued in furniture but their appearance. As Hamish points out, broadleaf forests are grown as crops in other European countries, so why not in Britain? We have several institutions with land, money, and a practical understanding of ‘the long game’, the Crown, the livery companies, the Church, for instance, all of which could surely bring about the cultivation of our native timbers. It needn't involve a lot of land, he suggests, and the space it requires could accommodate

other activities while the trees are growing.

In the absence of the economies of scale that such plantations would bring, however, the supply of our native timbers largely depends upon individuals milling a burr walnut here, or a pippy yew there, though the cost of such small-scale processing is so high that as often as not a tree will go for firewood. Hamish is genuinely baffled: “We attach so much value to things like rosewood and ebony, but we [could] have the alternatives if only we grew them.”



**Extreme example: there's a need for a wider appreciation of bog oak, especially among the landowners who hold the key to the remaining reserves**

that the tree was more porous, or had been subject to some decay before fossilisation began. This may be, Hamish reckons, why it's rare to find bog oak that's black throughout but also dense and free from signs of decay or infestation. By the same reasoning, timber that was tighter or more quickly preserved was presumably less susceptible to water penetration, and it's this that Hamish believes produces his preferred boards. Shading from black on the outside edge to a mellow amber towards the heart, they're not only harder than the all-black timber but, at more than 900kg/cu m, they're also denser than Indian rosewood. Not only is it deeply beautiful but also the most expensive of our native hardwoods by an East Anglian mile. The very finest cuts become tonewoods used for making stringed instruments, for which there are very specific requirements including the distance between annular rings – 30-35 rings per inch in bog oak – and their perpendicularity to the face; the added value of their preparation brings the cost of these instrument sets to £1050/cu ft.

That's not to say, mind you, that the bog oak trail is paved with gold; if anything, it's stained with iron oxide. As the difficulties of judging a trunk suggest, there's an element of risk and speculation in mining this stuff: Hamish rejects



Cool to the touch: it was the promise of this colour and figure that persuaded Hamish he should keep the Jubilee oak whole when he first saw it Photograph: Character Communications



It took 17 people to carry each plank and lift them into... Photograph: Adamson and Low



"I'm interested in bog oak," says Hamish, "because of its visual impact." Adamson & Low's bold designs show all the timber's strength of character and it's great for stringed instruments too

Photographs: Adamson and Low, left, & Gary Southwell



## Drying: kiln v air

If kiln drying in general has acquired an uncertain reputation, Hamish reckons, it's because it's sometimes done as quickly as possible for purely commercial reasons; if, on the other hand, it's done as carefully as possible, then it affords the means to control conditions for the best possible result. It's like air-drying would be if every day was a perfect drying day, and it's this care and consistency that bog oak requires if it's to be seasoned successfully.

Starting with saturated planks, then, Hamish steadily raises the temperature in the kiln by 5°C every 24 hours to not more than 30°C. Once the air inside the kiln is itself saturated, he'll begin slowly extracting the water vapour from it, which has the effect of drawing water out of the timber in a progressive fashion. "The trick," he explains, "is not in extracting the water, but in extracting it evenly in order to get flat boards without shakes." The straighter and tighter the tree, he's found, the more even the rate of moisture extraction is likely to be, though

of course the thicker the plank the more likely you are to get variations in drying; over the years, Hamish has come to plank his bog oak at 1¾in and 2¾in.

His kilns have enough capacity to dry about 200cu ft of timber, so what they can't accommodate goes into his air-drying sheds, but only as a holding measure. Because air drying doesn't offer the control required for even extraction, he puts a brake on moisture loss by spraying the sticked planks twice a day; when kiln space becomes available, he'll effectively restart the drying process by soaking the timber thoroughly before loading it in the kilns. There, the warm, saturated atmosphere will re-establish a condition of uniform moisture content from where the process of controlled drying can begin.

"If you have all that water to play with to start with, and don't extract it too quickly, you can't really damage the timber. What you can do, though, is extract it too slowly, when dormant fungal spores in the wood come to life in the warmth and humidity."

50% of what he's offered, often making fruitless trips to the fens. Meanwhile, drying the timber that he does acquire is a long and – when it must be kept moist while awaiting kiln space – labour-intensive process, at the end of which a proportion of the wood will be waste, and only a relatively small amount of the very finest grades.

It's small wonder, then, that many people have given up even trying to work with bog oak. But, like the black iron oxide in its dust, the timber's depth of character has been working its way under Hamish's skin ever since he first encountered it at the end of the '70s, when he was a student of furniture-making at the Isle of Ely College in the heart of bog oak country. During those years, however, he's begun to notice that the supply is dwindling: "Less and less is being dug up, and what is [being found] is of a lesser quality." Moreover, he thinks it likely that this decline will continue, and the prospect of its inevitable disappearance is not only a sharp reminder to better appreciate our native timbers, but to do something constructive with the bog oak that we have. And in this regard, the Diamond Jubilee Fenland Black Oak Project might prove to be Hamish's finest (sub-fossilised) hour.



## The find of a lifetime

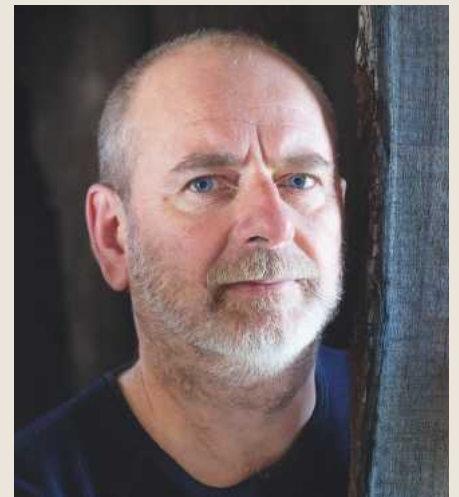
In March 2012, a bog oak was brought to light that was more than 13m long, though to judge from its parallel dimensions it was only part of what had been a far larger tree, so large, in fact, that Hamish couldn't tell which end of the remains would've been root and which end canopy. Yet, as far as he could determine, what was left was both straight and free of rot or infestation: "It was an incredible day. I spent hours and hours inspecting it, but couldn't find a single pocket of rot, or a single worm hole." It will, in all likelihood, prove to be the find of his bog oak career: not the largest, perhaps, but so remarkably well-preserved that he doesn't expect to see its like again. Which is probably why, sitting in an East Anglian field, he experienced one of those creative epiphanies, a vision of the boards that the tree promised to yield preserved whole and used to create something whose length would give the single largest glimpse of the lost world from which it came, and evoke a sense of wonder at the giants that once forested the fens.

"It was a crazy idea!" Hamish reflects. The problems were legion: how do you go about lifting and planking a trunk so long, or drying the boards, let alone making anything out of them? But these, he decided, were merely practical issues capable of solution, and quite secondary to the importance of preserving this singular specimen.

One by one, while the trunk lay safely wrapped and reinterred, the questions were answered by a remarkable effort of collective goodwill. Thanks initially to Logosol, the UK agents for Norwood, for example, a portable mill was flown over from Canada, complete with extension sections to make up a 54ft bed. ACF Telehandler, a family business in Norfolk, provided the machinery and drivers to lift the tree into place; still more labour, expertise and vehicles were provided to cut and transport the 10 planks into which the tree was cut, while the Building Crafts College in Stratford, East

## Hamish Low: then and now

After taking the City & Guilds 1, 2 and advanced furniture-making courses at Wisbech, Hamish spent five years working for a cabinetmaker before moving on to a one-year furniture restoration course at West Dean, where he stayed on to help with restoration work on the estate itself. A couple more stints in restoration bookended four years' work as a maker in two of the best-known 'shops in the country – the Edward Barnsley Workshop and John Makepeace's imaginarium at Parnham House. Since 1992, however, he's worked with his partner Nicola Adamson, herself a graduate of Makepeace's school, and co-owner of their cabinetmaking business Adamson & Low ([www.adamsonandlow.com](http://www.adamsonandlow.com))



London provided the space for a custom-made kiln built by Steve Cook (now of Workshop East).

All this support kept the cost of the excavating, milling and drying operation to just £5000, which was stumped up, so to speak, by the Carpenters Company. To top everything off, Buckingham Palace recognised the tree's discovery in the diamond anniversary year of the Queen's coronation, and presumably its symbolism of its enduring nature, by awarding the endeavour Diamond Jubilee status. And the goal of this endeavour, for which Hamish has become a slightly reluctant spokesman? Nothing less than a gift to the nation.

## The once & future oak

The initial task that the project's participants have set themselves is to use four of the 10 planks to create a table that, on first sight appears as a black monolith 1.5m wide and 13m long but which, as it's approached, reveals itself as timber in whose unexpected detail – the part-fossilised figure that runs unbroken for its entire length – can be read the story of the

tree that it once was.

It's a wholly uncompromising vision – the idea of cutting the boards is unconscionable – and one without precedent: there is nothing comparable in our islands. And therein lies the challenge. Not to Hamish and the other makers involved: their hardest work has been done; the boards have been saved. Nor is it in making the table, which is comparatively straightforward: the two outer boards will be hinged to form drop leaves using a scribed joint that Hamish and Steve Cook are calling the 'river' joint because it will preserve some of the boards' waney wanderings and so suggest the rivers that played a large part in the black oak's history.

No, the real challenge now is to the institutions that could give the table a fitting home where it can be used and also seen by the public.

What's required is for decision-makers in these places to exercise some imagination, to give this once-mighty oak – forests of which would have played a central role in the lives of the peoples of our island – a place in the future life of this country.



...the custom-made kiln, which took nine months to remove the 1.6 tons of water that they contained

Photograph: Character Communications



Once dry, however, the planks emerged straight, split-free, and astoundingly flat. When laid on this platform with a stick every 600mm, they touched at every single point!

Photograph: Adamson and Low

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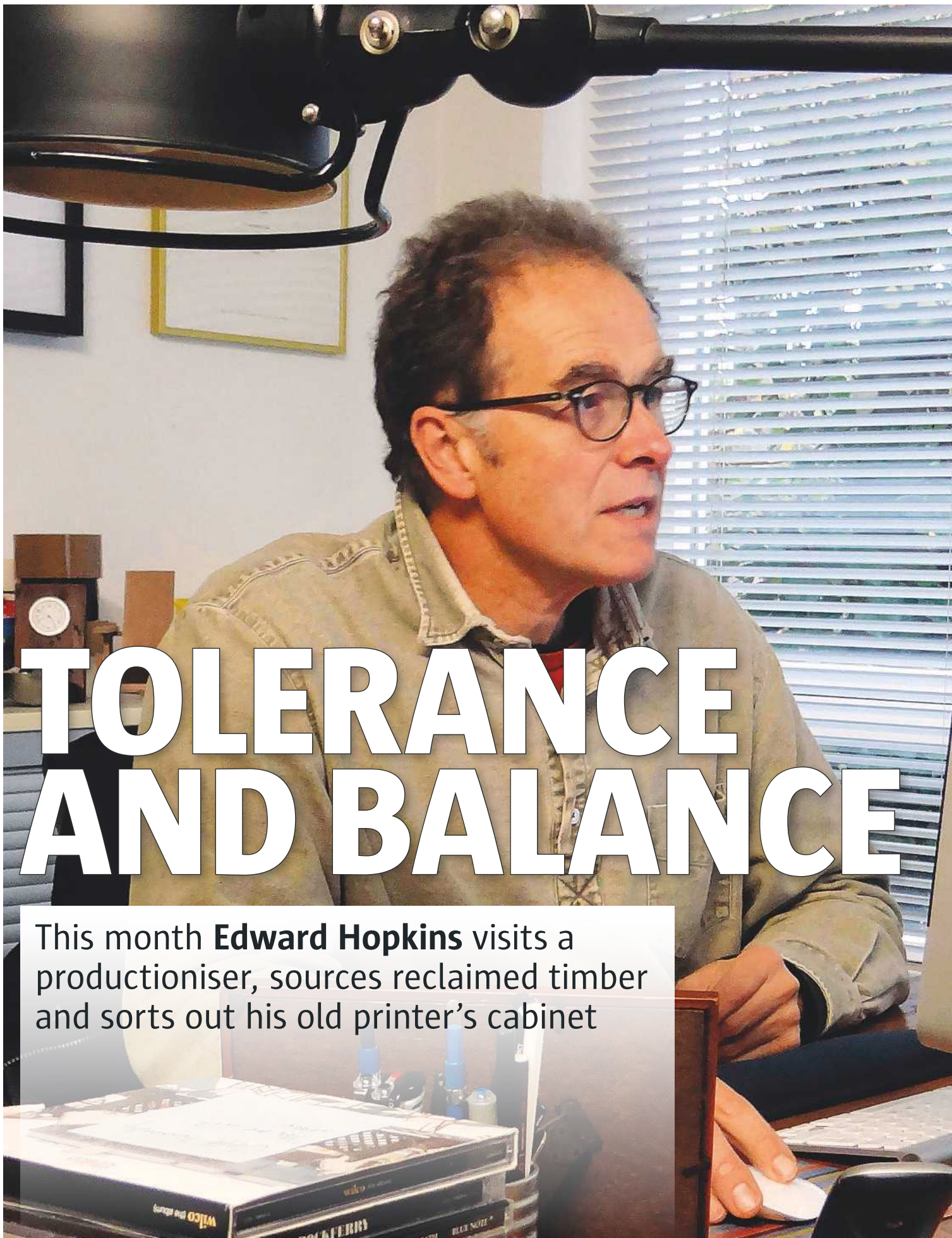
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# TOLERANCE AND BALANCE

This month **Edward Hopkins** visits a productioniser, sources reclaimed timber and sorts out his old printer's cabinet



**D**avid Ames, left, doesn't make furniture. He "productionises" it, and if that term sounds complicated and a little scary, so it should. Previously, David was a product designer – air conditioning units, baby alarms, physical packaging and so on – and so he is *au fait* with computers and familiar with engineering. In 1997, he took a six-month course in furniture making with Michael Scott followed by a further six months renting workshop space with him. Now he brings engineering tolerances to the bench.

Plenty of engineers produce meticulous work, but it often lacks balance and finesse. What sets David apart is that he is also an artist and a collector of art. In his spare time he attends print-making classes and has already sold some of his pieces. He brings the aesthetic alongside the technical and the practical. He uses his head, his hands and his heart in equal measure.

He is patient, with himself and with his clients. Some want to be involved in the design process and he is keen to evince the best answers to their questions. He is a problem-solver; indeed it is tempting to suggest he creates them.

His current project is for a couple of local patrons, for whom he has designed three tessellating and curvilinear tables. In his own hallway is a large yew dining table. Obscuring it is an even larger CNC-cut MDF template, the third so far, and he is still not happy. His software has let him down. He runs his finger over the junction of two curves. He can feel it, and he doesn't want to.

The table legs are in the workshop, and I ask if I might see them. David apologises that his workshop is in a bit of a mess, see photo!

## 3-week glue-up

Like the top, the legs are to be in the shape of trunks and branches. On the floor of his workshop are two of the 24 leg blanks. "It's my third week and 44th gluing up," David says, a



You need a lot of cramps for all those legs

little ruefully. "I utterly underestimated the time it would take to glue these together!" Notice the pristine G-cramps. Notice the MDF cramping blocks exactly the size of the glued assembly. What you can't see is a little dowel drilled down through the blocks to prevent them squidding sideways as the pressure is applied – the dowelled margin will later be sawn away. Perfection permeates every stage.

He is making the table from a beech tree provided by the clients. David has had it sawn, and has kilned it and acclimatised it. The machined components are flawless. This disturbed him. He was pleased to find an amount of fine spalting, and has carefully arranged it on the tabletop.

I am struck by an irony. This beech tree that will have had a perfect trunk and branch construction has been felled, chopped, ripped, dried, sawn, planed by top-quality machine and then finished off with a tri plane so shiny it looks as if it's fresh from its box. Then the glued blocks will be cut to shape and jointed. All this involves a phenomenal amount of effort and waste. All this to produce, um, a perfect trunk and branch construction. I wonder for a moment if I like what's going on. I don't like waste, and I don't like unnecessary effort. Neither, however, do I like wanton bonfires. How many trees of all

denominations have been sawn up and burned on the spot?

Judging by the rest of David's work, this table will do more than use the timber. It will turn the grey boughs, the lime and copper leaves inside out to marble white; it will distil it, abstract it and reassemble it as itself. It would be hard to be more respectful towards a tree.

## Topsham table

Take another table: his Topsham table is 12ft long by 4ft wide. The top is an amazing piece of pippy oak. The undercarriage is made of reclaimed sea defences from Hastings all battered and fissured – "lovely bits of wood" – braced with stainless steel. "It took a bit of working out," and he has several sheets of alternative designs to prove it. Then there's the model – a work of craftsmanship in its own right.

The table attracts an inquiry every 10 days or so, but the price puts people off. He wants to "value engineer" the Topsham table, reducing its weight and complexity and therefore its cost. But that's a job in itself, and yet one more thing to do.

He does have another order and has tried to obtain more timber, but the rest of the sea defences were bought and – he winces at this – sawn up for joinery. The next table will be



And David apologised for a messy workshop!



David is looking to reduce the weight of the Topsham table so he can make it cheaper Photograph by Rosie Parsons



It is made from reclaimed oak sea defences and stainless steel

For David the fun comes in the challenge

This box (below left) was commissioned for a collection of watches



## It doesn't grow on trees

David bought his reclaimed sea defences from Winkleigh Timber in the middle of Devon, at six acres the largest yard of reclaimed timber, slate and stone in the country. He could have had part of Hull Fish Market, a dry dock for Second World War battleships or a mill from Louisiana.

John Winkworth, an enterprising and straightforward man, sources timber from mills and factories in London, Nottingham and Birmingham. He also travels to Scotland, Europe, America, India, Bangladesh and China salvaging timber.

He has just brought in 11 40ft containers of southern American yellow pine. His large bandsaws will resaw it to order, and the 'flap sander' he has developed will clean off accumulated dirt but leave the marks of age.

So the next time you want a piece of pitch pine 16in x 8in x 42ft long and 150- years-old you know where it is. See more at [www.winkleightimber.co.uk](http://www.winkleightimber.co.uk)



made with timber reclaimed from a Kentucky cotton mill. He shows me the stack of baulks with the marks of age and the worn away paint that he will keep.

## Challenge by choice

"Every job is a challenge," he says. If it wasn't, I don't think he'd take it. His finest furniture is so labour intensive that he could not survive financially on it alone. I'm a little surprised to hear that sometimes he fills the gap by making windows but no, not ordinary windows. He shows me a mock-up of a hopper window, weather-sealed on three sides and rebated and hinged at the bottom. It looks like a giant wooden puzzle and it takes him a few seconds to remember how it goes.

David shows me a box commissioned to display a collection of watches. At the back is a secret drawer operated by two springs – one of which he made by laminating thin layers of wood. See the hinges and the lock? David made a jig to rout out these recesses. This is a tricky operation and he couldn't bear the thought of a mishap, so he made two complete boxes to be on the safe side!

I don't want to give the impression that David is obsessive, just very involved and engaged – integrated, you might say, with every aspect of his work. Nevertheless, I'm concerned again. There is no shortage of grace, poise and fluidity in his work but what place does he keep for spontaneity?

At the start of a commission he'll be playing with tape and a glue gun trying out various permutations and possibilities. But it is when no customer is in sight that he is most impulsive.

## Witty fruit bowl

He shows me a fruit bowl that he made from laminations for a rocking chair. It is elegant, simple and witty. The engineered split along its spine holds the fruit in place so the pears become the art and the bowl the frame.

Vases consisting of a row of test tubes held in holes are original and fun, and are regular sellers. He turns them out but he changes

## Not what it says on the tin

I bought an old printers' cabinet. It was missing a few of its 56 drawers but each could hold a double handful of screws, bolts, washers, brackets, hinges, etc.

I've just been sorting through it with a view to doing fresh labels. In the drawer marked 'Washers' were magnetic cupboard catches, a large freezer bag clip, a pair of dividers and a cigarette lighter, and yes, a few small rubber washers whose hour will probably never come.

For a while I gave up on labels and tried the intuitive approach. I had columns of roofing nails, galvanized nails, oval and round; steel screws, brass screws, coach screws and bolts. Bottom rows large: top rows small. Easy.

Sometimes it worked, but other times I had to flip out every flipping drawer to find what I needed.

Not everything qualifies for its own label but it takes up residence anyway. The dead Biros weren't dead when I put them there.

The knife blades weren't rusty, and I felt sure that one day I'd use a jig to restore them to their razor glory. Only one box was full. This was of hexagonal nuts and spiral springs (no bolts). The roofing felt nail boxes were half full – both of them. '2½" Galv. Nails' was half full too.

## Itinerant screws

Most boxes were nearly empty. The most itinerant of commodities turned out to be little brass screws. Some of them sat sedately in their original cardboard boxes, with or without lids. Others rolled around by themselves. One drawer had nothing in it but a few small brass screws and, as if from a sense of fairness, a couple of steel ones too.

I came across items that shouldn't have

been there at all. Tangled up with '1¼" Nuts & Bolts' was a pierced silver necklace on a silver chain. I have no idea where this came from. I found an old pair of pincers with curves as fine as any sculpture, and a lovely boxwood ruler with protractor markings. A cheap calligraphy pen was bound to have dried up years ago, but I tried it and it hasn't.

## Granddad's workshop

I have a couple of small cardboard boxes, and three old tobacco tins heavy with their ancient contents. These came via my father's garage, from my grandfather's workshop which, by the time I saw it – he died before I was born – was worse than mine; stuff

everywhere heaped on benches beneath a blanket of dust and dark. When we went to Cornwall on holiday, my father would spend a few mornings trying to restore order, and salvage anything of worth.

I have a box of steel pins so small that they have to

be gripped with fine-nose pliers. They are rusty but occasionally they prove invaluable. I have guarded this little cardboard box through every reorganisation. I knew exactly where it was.

When I came to it, my heart fluttered. Although I've often taken the lid from the box, I must not have removed the box from the drawer because when I did, I saw something I had not noticed before. Glued to the side of the box is a piece of paper – an order note – bearing my grandfather's name. The label on the end of this box, whose base is lightly covered with ¼in steel pins, reads 'BUTT HINGES, BRIGHT SELF COLOUR, 1838 TEN PAIRS, 2")'. My grandfather's storage system was obviously the same as mine. I find this reassuring.



American black walnut fruit bowl made from the laminations of a rocking chair

them too. It is the problem that holds an appeal for him, not the solution.

David uses hand tools more than machines. "It's the way I trained, but I'm not super-fast: I have to work at it." This is maybe the last piece in the jigsaw. He does stop work. He does watch television. He and Rosie, his wife – who runs her own business promoting 'eco-weddings' – do have the odd day off, but having his workshop attached to his house, and their large office within it, David puts in long hours.

"As a product designer, half of my ideas ended up in a drawer. Two years later some would appear manufactured in a diminished form, and two years after that, they'd be in landfill." There's no such danger now.

Visit [www.davidamesstudio.co.uk](http://www.davidamesstudio.co.uk) to have a look for yourself.



This photo was taken during a course David Vickers put together for the army

# MEET THE TREE FELLA

Want to fell your own trees safely? David Vickers runs courses on all aspects of chainsaw and aerial work as **Andrea Hargreaves** discovers



**W**hile the rest of us hung back, if not frankly terrified of the chainsaws being demonstrated by Makita at their Milton Keynes HQ, at least treating them with all due respect, David Vickers seized the meatiest of the lot and powered it confidently and approvingly through a hefty tree trunk like a knife through butter.

Greatly daring, I got all dressed up in the safety kit and had a go myself with one of the daintier models, then, feeling like one of the lads, got talking to David. It turned out that he runs courses for would-be tree fellers, covering everything from chainsaw maintenance and crosscutting to tree climbing and aerial rescue.

He says: "After spending around eight years managing and delivering forestry and arboriculture short courses for Sparsholt College, I started Drivelink Training. With industry-recognised qualifications for many of the forestry and arboriculture units, as well as an honours degree in education, I can provide high-quality training tailored to the individual looking to grow their skills and knowledge in practical tree management. I have worked with many businesses, individuals, charities and government agencies, as well as with people from all walks of life.

"Although based in Farnham, Surrey, I am willing to travel throughout the UK to deliver training designed to meet your requirements. I can offer standalone courses or create a bespoke offering."

The chainsaw course is a Level 2 award designed to provide the skills and underpin the knowledge to safely and effectively maintain and use a chainsaw. In addition to health and safety aspects, routine maintenance, ranging from chain sharpening to air filter, spark plug, recoil starter and guide-bar maintenance, is covered.

The course looks at the different types of drive sprockets, how to replace them and the clutch systems in use.



Learning to fell a tree correctly, this student will live to tackle many more

## Tree-climbing courses

The Tree Climbing and Aerial Rescue course (Level 2) is not primarily about rediscovering your inner child but you will learn the skills required to climb trees, how to move around the tree canopy and carry out aerial rescues from the tree.

The course looks at equipment checks and knots before moving on to setting up a climbing system and ascending the tree.

You will carry out branch walking, setting supplementary anchors as well as two different types of aerial rescue from the tree canopy. The course also covers the use of spikes and you will need to demonstrate installing a false anchor, and two different types of rescue from a pole.

David warns: "This is a physically demanding course and you will need a reasonable level of fitness to complete it. The course does not cover the use of saws in the tree.

Move up to a Level 3 award though and the course addresses aerial cutting with a chainsaw, covering both handheld and freefall methods of cutting using step cuts and sink cuts. Identification of the branch-bark collar is covered, so that accurate pruning cuts can be made. Work positioning methods will also be discussed.

Safe use of the chainsaw is an important element, taking in tension and compression cuts as well as vertical and horizontal bore cuts.

The course can be combined over six days with the Level 2 award in felling and processing trees up to 380mm in girth, where the diameter of the stem is less than the length of the guide bar. The course looks at the basic felling technique for upright trees, as well as methods used for trees that are weighted either in the direction of fell, or against it. The



Using a chainsaw safely in aerial combat demands a lot of skill and knowledge

Arborists can extend their knowledge with a Level 3 in aerial tree rigging. This course covers the use of log mass tables to estimate the mass of the timber to be cut, peak system loads, installation and usage of bollards or port-a-wrap devices as well as dismantling horizontal and vertical sections.

course also covers dealing with hung-up trees, dealing with the canopy and cross-cutting to a site specification.

## Windblown trees

For those with felling experience there is a Level 3 course dealing with larger trees, which also covers hung-up trees, setting and using a winch, breakdown of the canopy and cross-cutting to a site specification. Another Level 3 course is designed to provide you with the skills and knowledge to deal with felling trees using a rope or winch, making use of appropriate felling aids, or you could learn how to deal with windblown trees, looking at relevant legislation, risk assessments and emergency planning. Says David: "This course looks at planning operations, securing root plates, severing the stem, dealing with side tension, branch removal, felling partially windblown trees and snapped trees and the use of reduction cuts for oversize stems. The primary focus is on safety, rather than timber production, as windblown trees present a wide variety of potentially dangerous situations for the chainsaw operator."

An Emergency Treework course covers securing root plates of windblown trees, dealing with the tree canopy and using failsafe methods with rope or winch.

## Next month...

David talks about basic management and fells a tree. For more on his courses go to [www.drivelinktraining.co.uk](http://www.drivelinktraining.co.uk)



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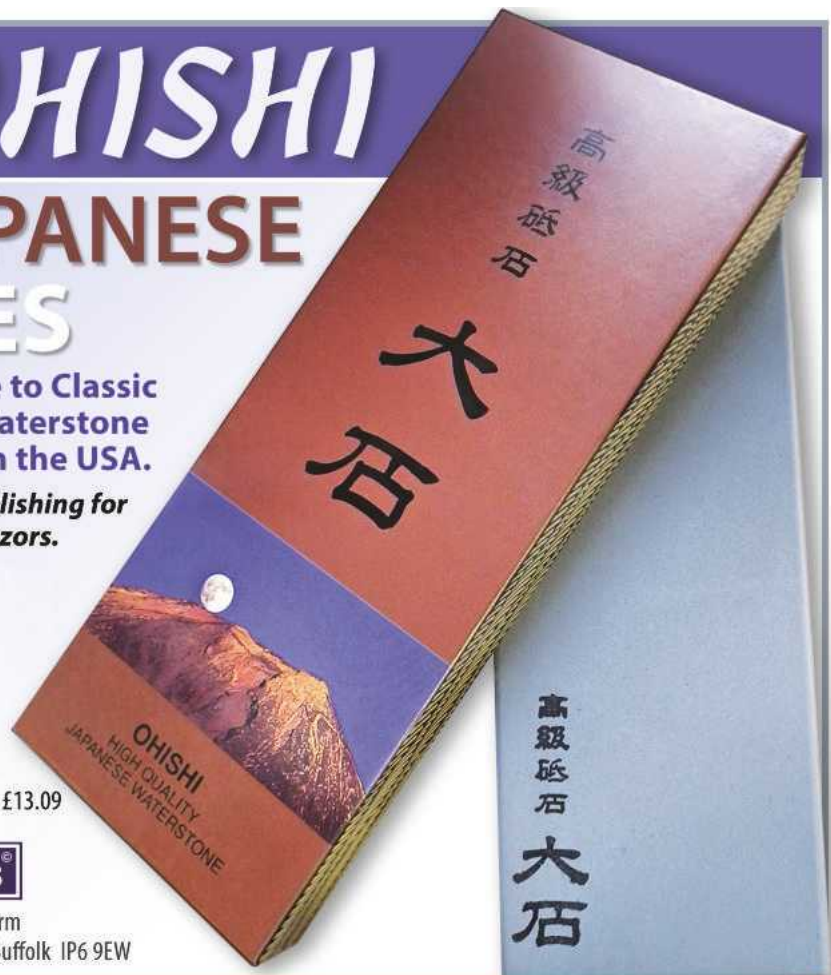
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## Fab furniture

Off on a tangent with the Beatles: Leon Osman, who designs and builds pieces from timber that he finds in skips and in his local park, has sent in a photo of this table inspired by the Abbey Road album. Love, love, we do!

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## Maths conundrum

Michael Huntley's ingenious construction for regular polygons of any number of sides had me flummoxed, GW286. As a mathematician, I knew that there could not be a construction using just ruler and compasses for polygons of 7, 9, 11 and 13 sides. I also knew that the construction for five sides was quite complex. And yet Michael's construction was simple and did appear to work for all of those numbers and everything in between as well. What was going on? I did some sums.

The answer is that the construction is approximate, not exact, but it is incredibly close to right. For example, if you are trying to draw a regular octagon in a circle of 30cm diameter, Michael's construction will get you within 1.7mm of the right point. For a hexagon the construction gets as close as within about 0.5mm of the right answer.

If those margins are not good enough for you, you could get a slightly better result by moving point C a touch closer to the centre of the circle. For example, for a hexagon the ideal position for C is 1.73205 radiuses from the centre, not the 1.75 in Michael's construction. But if you are capable of drawing that precisely then you might just as well calculate the exact length of the sides of the polygon to start with.

**Jeremy Colman**

*The method does not work for heptagons and I will be writing more on the subject next month.*

*My method was taken from a Victorian book for cabinetmakers see below, and therefore predates computers. An understanding of geometry, not CAD or trigonometry, is a very good idea for today's woodworkers – and a lot cheaper.*

*Peter Thomson and Son Mid-Victorian Furniture Designs for the Student and the Artisan, by J Martin & C Martin, published by Antique Collectors' Club, £65.*

**Michael Huntley**



## WRITE & WIN!

We always love hearing about your projects, ideas, hints and tips, and/or like to receive feedback about GW's features, so do drop us a line – you never know, you might win our great Letter of the Month prize, currently a Trend Easyscribe, worth £29.99 inc VAT. Write to the address on the left for a chance to enhance your marking capability with this versatile workshop aid.



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## Which oak is best?

I have been asked to make some kitchen unit worktops in oak, which is a new one on me.

Can you advise me which would be more suitable, European or American white oak? Also what would be a suitable treatment for the oak?

**John Taylor, by email**

*Oak is ideal for a hardwearing worktop, although like any hardwood it's not actually maintenance-free. Either European or American white oak would be fine, and depending on the timber supplier they can be of similar cost, though you'll pay considerably more for English oak. I bought some boards recently, grown in eastern Europe, which have beautiful figuring. American oak tends to be blander, though similar in colour. If your timber merchant allows you to sort through a pile you may well come across quarter-sawn boards, which will display oak's distinctive medullary rays.*

*Oil is the preferred worktop finish for oak because it soaks into the timber and can be repaired easily by light sanding and re-oiling. I've just used Osmo products on my own worktop and was really impressed with the finish. It's expensive, but very easy to use: an initial application of Wood Protector (microporous base coat), followed by several coats of Top Oil, creating a beautiful matt finish. Osmo uses a blend of natural oils and waxes which are completely safe for food.*

*Whatever finish you use, make sure you apply the same number of coats to the underside as the top surface. Edges should have even more coats if possible, especially around the sink cutout. Once the worktop is installed and the kitchen is in use, make sure spillages are mopped up immediately, particularly around taps and sink.*

*Now turn to p74 where I show you how to tackle the sink cutout and build an upstand.*

**Phil Davy, Consultant Editor**

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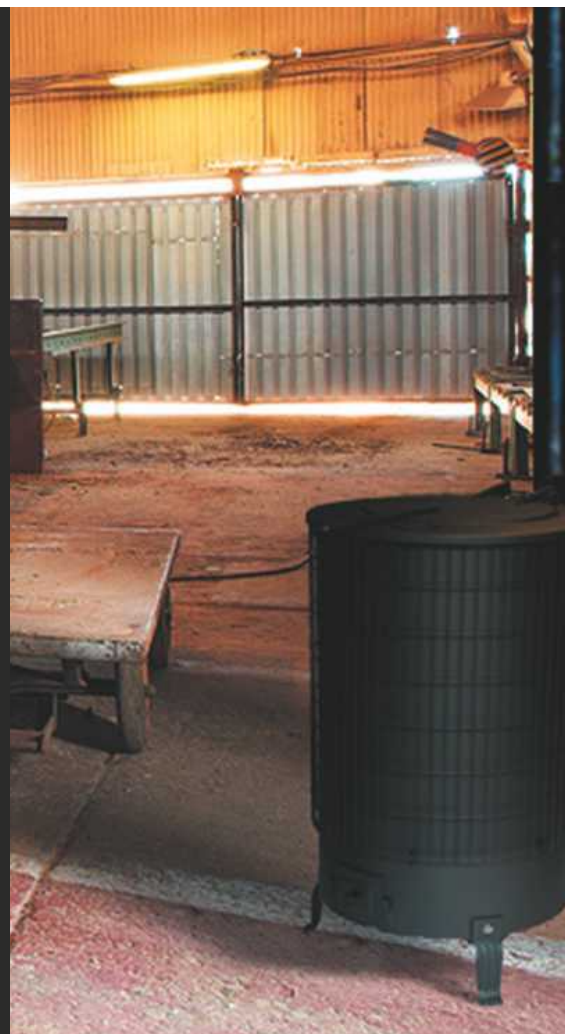
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# Around the House

with Phil Davy



Having a major household clearout is not only cathartic, but often reveals hidden treasure. Missing

for many years was my grandfather's gold pocket watch, which he'd left me, so I was delighted when this reappeared recently. Not only that, but a lost issue of *GW* that I'd been trying to track down. Dating back 11 years, *GW*140 contained one of my favourite projects, a Toylander. This quarter-size Land Rover replica was fun to build and if I'd had more space it would still be here. Happily, plans and parts are still available for these fantastic vehicles, so perhaps I ought to find a bigger garden... Check out [www.toylander.com](http://www.toylander.com)

*Phil Davy*

Phil Davy, Consultant Editor

## Out & about

### Metric muddle...

Inspecting some European oak at my local timber merchant recently, I was greeted by a young lad who seemed keen to help. He offered to get his mate with a forklift to shift a stack of boards so I could take a closer look at what was lurking underneath. The lad pointed out that he himself didn't have a licence but would be undergoing training the following week, so would soon be behind the wheel. Turns out it was his first day in the job, increasingly apparent when it came to totting up the board sizes I'd selected. Attempting to work in imperial measurements, he jotted down some random dimensions on a scrap of paper and told me to take it to the office for pricing up. Like most woodworkers of a certain age I'm happy to work with either metric or imperial systems, but I couldn't make head or tail of what matey had written down. Neither could the guy behind the counter, so he walked back to the yard and re-measured the boards himself.

As a hardwood stockist it was no surprise to



find the merchant still working in feet and inches, where timber is still priced by the cubic foot. The odd thing was, the lad had obviously learnt metric at school and was attempting to convert dimensions back to imperial with a rather baffling tape measure.

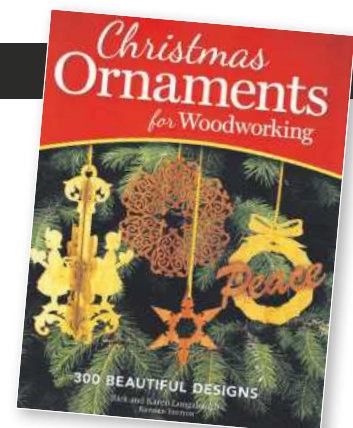
I was going to add that hopefully there's no written test involving metric/imperial conversion to qualify for a forklift licence in a timber yard... However, I returned the following week and enquired how the forklift training was going. To my surprise, matey had passed the test and was now licensed to thrill!

## Book review

### Christmas Ornaments for Woodworking

By Rick & Karen Longabaugh

If you're expecting a range of projects for the festive season from this book you may be disappointed. It's not much more than a library brimming with full-size scrollsaw patterns to photocopy, rather than actual items to build. Nothing wrong with that, though without a scrollsaw you'll struggle. Arranged in various themes – angels and nativity, wildlife, Victorian and so on – there are more than 300 designs to choose from. I'd like to have seen some sort of skill level rating, though if you're experienced with a scrollsaw I guess it won't take long to assess each pattern in terms of difficulty. There are a few pages on selecting materials, transferring patterns, blade choice and cutting techniques,



though it's quite basic stuff. Hanging wooden ornaments for the Christmas tree may not be everyone's cup of tea, though there are some appealing intricate designs here.



Published by Fox Chapel

Price: £10.99.

Web: [www.thegmcgroup.com](http://www.thegmcgroup.com)



## Winter project

Takes: *longer than you think* **KITCHEN COMPLETION**

# Top drawer result!

### Tools you'll need

Router, jigsaw, sander, drill

**Phil Davy** cuts into his bespoke oak worktop, makes an upstand and fits Ikea drawers and cupboard fronts to finish his kitchen refit



**1** After boring 35mm-diameter holes in each worktop section, rout channel for connector bolts



**2** Check bolts fit channel and are deep enough; a Forstner bit reduces risk of breaking through



**3** Where access to water pipes is needed drill through cabinet rear panels with hole saw



**4** You may find a jigsaw easier for larger cutouts in panels; clean up cut edges with abrasive



**5** Before finally fixing worktop, ensure cabinets are level; set height via adjuster legs



**6** Mark position for moisture barrier underneath worktop and add dabs of silicone adhesive



**7** Cut moisture barrier to size and stick to worktop; apply pressure, smoothing outwards from centre



**8** Apply silicone to ends of worktop and align sections; insert bolts and tighten with spanner



**9** Where worktop sits above kitchen appliances fix to supporting timbers with stretcher plates

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## Last month the oak worktop was cut to size and given several coats of Osmo oil.

Due to its overall length, two sections needed to be joined together. This should be done with worktop connector bolts, typically using three across a 620mm-deep top. You can either bore holes with a Forstner bit, then rout the channel, or use a worktop routing jig. It's important when joining worktops together to spread silicone generously across the end grain. Although most will squeeze out once the bolts are tightened, anything helps to repel water.

Where a hardwood worktop sits above a washing machine, tumble drier, dishwasher or microwave it's important to install a moisture barrier to prevent damage to the timber. This is

a thick foil-backed sheet that's simply cut to size and glued to the underside of the timber with dabs of silicone sealant.

## Upstand and hardware

Don't forget that if you trim a hardwood worktop to get the sink to fit snugly you'll need to re-oil any sawn timber. Not only should the underside of a timber worktop receive the same number of coats of oil as the top, the ends should get even more attention.

Once the worktop is fitted you're on the home straight. It's essential to fit an upstand along edges where this butts against a wall. It will cover the expansion gap and makes fitting a worktop to out-of-square walls much easier. Often ceramic tiles are used when a laminated

top is installed, but here an oak upstand is more appropriate. This should be oiled on the reverse and fixed with a flexible adhesive, rather than screwing directly to the wall. Don't fix the upstand to the worktop itself, but finish off with a bead of clear silicone sealant along the joint.

## Drawers & doors

Fitting drawers, fronts and doors is likely to be where you customise standard units with knobs or handles. It may seem obvious, but don't mark each drawer front or door individually when fitting hardware. It's far more efficient to make a simple jig with pilot holes for the fixing screws, though test this for accuracy on a waste piece of MDF or plywood first.



**10** Fix worktop securely through upper cabinet steel rails with round-head screws and washers



**11** Check sink fits into worktop opening and trim oak if necessary; attach taps and flexible pipes



**12** Apply generous bead of sanitary silicone around perimeter of worktop cutout for sink



**13** Carefully lift sink on to worktop and check position; bolt through brackets underneath to cabinet



**14** Apply bead of sealant to worktop and smooth off; masking tape along edges of sink gives neat finish



**15** A simple jig for drilling holes for handles ensures they are uniform on drawers and doors



**16** Drill holes with scrap wood cramped to inside of drawer fronts; screw handles in place

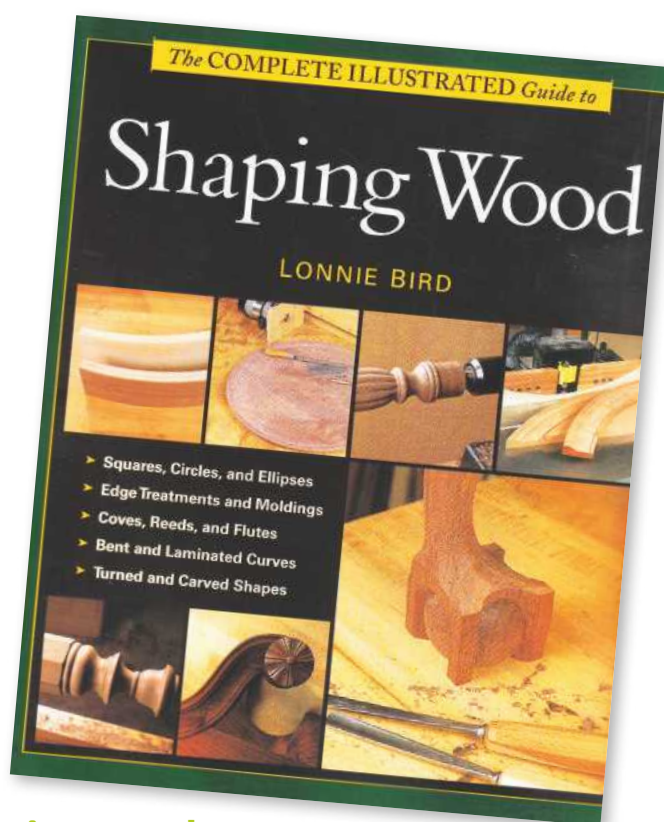


**17** Fix upstand to walls to hide worktop gap; seal joint with clear or coloured silicone



**18** All that sanding and oiling was worth the effort, though oak worktops need regular maintenance

## Book reviews



### Shaping wood

By Lonnie Bird

Even if most of your woodwork involves working with straight lines in sheet materials or PAR softwood, occasionally there's a need to work with shapes and curves, no matter how simple. This comprehensive guide concentrates on furniture, though the same tools and principles apply across the board. As always from Taunton Press, photography and illustrations are excellent.

Kicking off with a lengthy chapter on machinery and hand tools, nothing is omitted. For example, if you've ever wondered about the exact curve of a particular carving gouge a diagram of every profile is included. Useful tips on coping with timber movement complete the first section.

If you've struggled with chest proportions, Hambidge rectangles – a new one on me – or Fibonacci numbers, these are clearly explained. All curved elements will fit within a rectangle or square, in case you wondered about the relevance. Tapering by machine and hand tools – dodgy on a table saw – chamfering and cutting octagons are covered, before moving on to arcs, ellipses, circles, plus interior and exterior curves; not only how to set them out, but techniques for cutting with bandsaw, router, scrollsaw and coping saw too. Complex shapes such as cabinet door profiles, raised panels and compound curves are explained in depth. Edge treatments and mouldings follow, including the use of scratch stocks, wooden planes and multi-planes. Architectural cornices, dentil and gooseneck mouldings, flutes and reeds are just a few of the advanced techniques dealt with fully as well.

Turning, carving, steam and kerf bending techniques complete what is a fabulous book. It contains a superb mix of hand, power tool and machinery techniques and would make a welcome gift for almost any woodworker. You'll probably be flicking through these pages all winter...



Published by Taunton Press

Price: £19.99.

Web: [www.thegmcgroup.com](http://www.thegmcgroup.com)

### Complete Pyrography

By Stephen Poole

Although pyrography may be considered more art than craft, the results are just as impressive when carried out by an expert. It's clear from this book that author Poole is just that. He begins with a history of pyrography and how Child hot-wire machines in particular were developed in Britain in the 1960s and '70s. After an introduction to materials and sources of inspiration – including dead mammals! – advice on choosing pyrography tools and equipment is brief but to the point. A couple of pages on making your own wire points will be invaluable for novice pyrographers, as will the next chapter on starting out and working safely.

The variety of textures possible on a piece of wood created by a tiny piece of hot wire is amazing, and the Sampler section here is fantastic. It's certainly enough to get me thinking about digging out my own pyrography machine that's been hiding for far too long... Exercises in simple composition, tracing, texturing and shading techniques follow, before exploration of the use of colour in pyrography and decorating turned items.

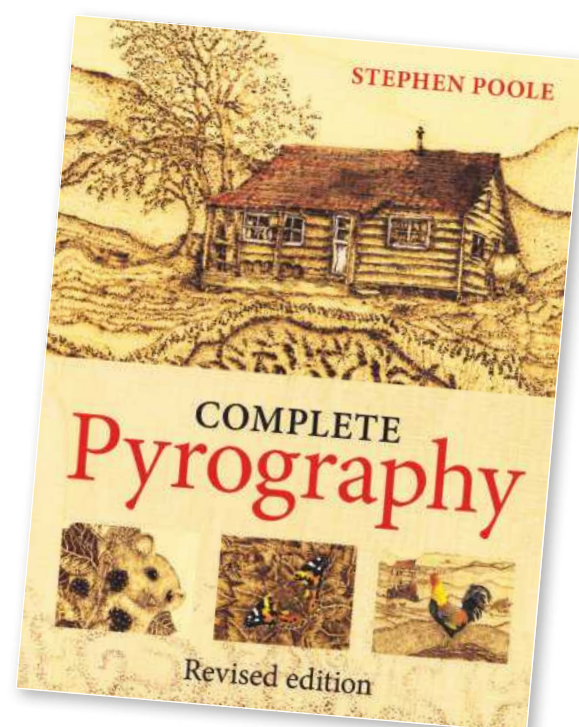
Throughout are fine examples of the author's own work. Especially noteworthy is a highly detailed explanation of how to recreate the image of a cottage from a photo. Beautiful work. Useful tips on finishing and selling your work complete what is a solid guide for anyone keen to try this specialised but fascinating branch of woodworking.



Published by GMC Books

Price: £16.99.

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## Useful kit Dremel 8050-35 Micro

# Cordless mini-tool

It's the time of year when power tool manufacturers pull out all the stops with Christmas just around the corner. Dremel is no exception and has the knack of regularly upgrading or tweaking its product range. Latest offering is the new Micro, a cordless mini-tool that's tiny compared with most previous models.

This is certainly a hi-tech little gadget, with visual displays at the base. Speed is controlled by + and - push buttons, a blue LED ladder display indicating your selected setting (in increments of 5000rpm). Speed range is from 5000 to 28,000rpm, though when you depress the power button the tool rather cleverly fires up at 15,000rpm, enabling the motor to reach full speed gradually.

A battery fuel gauge shows you roughly how much juice is left: green when fully charged, amber when partially charged and red when almost empty. Very handy as the battery is built in, so once drained you can't just insert a new power pack. Instead, the docking station will recharge in about three hours and 45 minutes. The Micro can be stored neatly here when not in use and there are holes for four accessory shafts.

## Li-ion power pack

Power is provided by a 7.2V, 1Ah Li-ion power pack, reducing weight and bulk. The blue LED speed display on the front of the housing scrolls up and down to indicate the device is charging, stopping when fully topped up.

A sophisticated electronic monitoring system limits current to the tool if overloaded, so the motor will cut out rather than overheat. Remove the tool from the workpiece and it can simply be restarted again. Clever stuff.

What sets this compact tool apart from other Dremel kit is the built-in worklight.

Four LEDs around the nose illuminate the work area evenly and are very effective. You can choose to switch off this feature by depressing the minus button three times while



Useful visual displays are located at the base



Speed is controlled by simple buttons



This button allows a gradual speed increase



LEDs do a great illumination job

the motor is running. Like cordless drill drivers, I'm sure it won't be long before this feature is standard on mini-tools from other manufacturers.

Although there's no EZ Twist nose cap to grip the collet nut, you get the standard Dremel wrench and spindle-locking button. The nose itself is slim and is soft-grip, making the tool very comfortable to use. It weighs just 250g, though still feels pretty solid.

Like the rest of Dremel's growing range of mini-tools, the Micro is supplied with a box of 35 accessories, from sanding and grinding discs to polishing and cutting wheels, including an EZ SpeedClic shaft. With no removable cap you can't fit some of Dremel's add-ons such as router bases or detailer's grip, which may restrict the tool's appeal to some woodworkers.

There's no plastic storage case this time, though included is a rather snazzy zipped hardshell case for the tool itself. With no space for the charger, you can still stash a few accessories in the internal pocket.

## Conclusion

This lovely little cordless tool would be perfect for miniature work such as dolls' house or toymaking. Its physical size lends it to small hands too, so it could be an exciting present to encourage those creative kids.



**Price:** £110

Dremel

**Made in:** Mexico

**Web:** [www.dremeleurope.com](http://www.dremeleurope.com)

Useful kit Logmatic 250 log splitter

## Safer way to split



The sharp wedge...

...is driven into the log



A steel guard is screwed to the tool side



Thick rubber grips provide a firm hold



Now is the time for gathering winter fuel, so any tool that makes converting logs easier has to be worth a closer look if you have a woodburner or open fire. You may well enjoy getting outdoors with the axe to split a few logs, but there's undoubtedly been a few accidents to users and bystanders over the centuries with this traditional tool. Not only that, but it can be hard work wielding a hefty axe. Logmatic log splitters are innovative tools designed in Finland, where they know a thing or two about cold weather and keeping warm. With these products there's no tool to swing or wedge to drive in with a hammer.

### Two size options

Two Logmatic versions are available. Both made from heavy gauge, powder-coated steel,

I tested the larger 250 model. Measuring 1050mm in length when closed, it consists of two sections, one sliding inside the other. The lower half is a hollow bar with a sharp wedge welded to the end. Inside this tube slides the upper solid striking bar. As this is plunged down, the wedge is driven into the log. For storage and transport, an effective steel guard is provided to cover the sharp edge and is easily screwed to the side of the tool.

At the top end, thick rubber grips enable you to hold the Logmatic firmly, though sturdy gloves should always be worn as well. In use, you stand a sawn log upright on stable ground (concrete, tarmac or a heavy board is fine), holding the tool vertically with the wedge resting on the wood. Gripping the upper striker bar, lift this and plunge it down a couple of

times. I found that three or four blows were enough to split every log I could find, the weight of the tool being sufficient to do most of the work. It's accurate, so you can exploit existing splits in logs or avoid knots. Not only that, but it's easy to split a large-diameter log into several smaller pieces for kindling quite safely. Sturdy boots are important, but apart from getting your feet out of the way there's very little risk compared with using an axe.

### Conclusion

This is certainly no lightweight kit, weighing around 5.5kg. If you prefer a lighter version, the Logmatic 150 is similar in construction and recommended for Scout groups and outdoor organisations. This splitter weighs 4kg and is shorter than its bigger brother. It costs £45, but no blade guard is provided.



Typical price: £65 plus P+P

Logmatic

Web: [www.logmatic.co.uk](http://www.logmatic.co.uk)

## Obamatic folding trestle



Besides log splitters, the Logmatic brand includes several other unusual tools in its range. Probably of most use to woodworkers is the Obamatic folding trestle, a sturdy steel support that will cope with loads up to 500kg (across four legs). You provide the 50mm sawn timber required for the horizontal bearers, which slot into sockets on top of each trestle. For stacking timber, boatbuilding, assembly work and so on, the Obamatic system is likely to be sturdier than most other supports on the market. A pair of trestles (four legs) costs £85, plus postage.



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## Turning yew trio



**Les Thorne** takes a yew branch and creates three projects for beginners, turning a mushroom, a goblet and an apple

**A** few years ago my father owned a woodturning supplies shop, selling tools, equipment and wood to both hobbyists and professionals. One of his biggest sellers on the wood front was kiln-dried yew branch wood. Yew is not a particularly rare timber in Hampshire – one tree surgeon I know calls it Hampshire weed. It is also a tree that does need some trimming and when one is felled it creates loads of branches in various sizes perfect for craft projects.

My father had a kiln made from a lorry refrigeration container. This was stacked with sawn timber and left to 'cook' on top of the planks. He filled the rest up with branch wood from 25mm to 75mm diameter – any

pieces larger than this were prone to cracking in the drying process.

After about six months they were taken out and cut into lengths and priced individually. They proved immensely popular and many customers went out with armfuls of them.

The beauty of yew is its orangey heart wood in contrast to its milky sap wood and the branches obviously show this off perfectly. Here I am making three projects from one of these blanks, a natural-edge goblet, a mushroom and a wooden apple. These are great projects for beginners and can be made from any branch wood, but remember that you are liable to get some cracking unless the timber has been seasoned.



# Mushroom



▲ Pic.1 Les has two pieces around 60mm long and the one for the goblet is 150mm; the contrast between the sapwood and the heartwood can clearly be seen



▲ Pic.2 He needs to hold one end of the blank for the mushroom in the scroll chuck; because of the short length of the blank he is trying to get away with as short a spigot as he can



▲ Pic.3 All these projects involve similar cuts; the spindle gouge is used to remove the wood; Les cuts a cove and then rolls round the tool into a convex cut



▲ Pic.4 The shape will hopefully end up as an ogee (a flattened S); always go really slow as you get to the centre because the wood is going much slower at this point



▲ Pic.5 If you do go too quickly you run the risk of pulling a plug of timber from the middle; stopping the lathe and hand sanding across the end is always an option



▲ Pic.6 Undercut the top of the mushroom boldly with a parting tool slightly pointing down; cut away the timber to the left as you go down, to give the tool clearance and stop it binding



▲ Pic.7 You can see how narrow Les has made the stem; this will give the piece much more definition; do not try and tool the top again at this point as it will be too weak



▲ Pic.8 Les shapes the stem with a bulb towards the bottom to represent his image of a mushroom or toadstool

# Turning



▲ Pic.9 Be really careful when sanding; watch your fingers and do not round over the natural edge; Les sands down to 400 grit for a smooth finish



▲ Pic.10 He parts off by carefully supporting the work with one hand while applying the 3mm parting tool; with variable speed slow it down, or you could use a saw



▲ Pic.11 You do tend to end up with a small peg that needs to be removed by hand; a sharp skew chisel is used here but do be really careful as the tool is very sharp



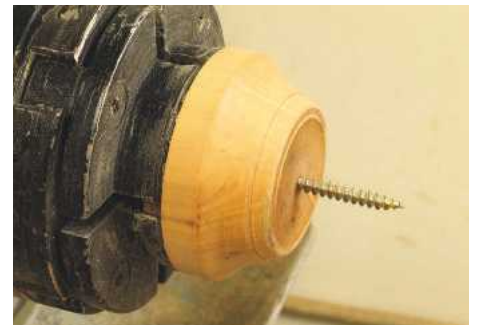
▲ Pic.12 Les finds that a high-gloss finish is best on this type of work; a couple of coats of gloss lacquer and a quick touch on the buffing wheel will bring up a really good shine



▲ Pic.13 The branch is ready to cut up and Les has marked roughly the sizes required for the three projects. Always use a V block arrangement on the bandsaw when cutting round stock



# Apple



▲ Pic.1 This is Les's homemade screw chuck; self-tapping screws like the ones used on pocket-hole jigs are best for this; if the screw is running out of true, just give it tap back into centre



▲ Pic.2 Cut the wood off at 60mm and drill a 3mm hole in the end; when you screw the wood onto the chuck make sure it's right up against the face of the chuck or risk breaking the screw



▲ Pic.3 When Les roughs out the blank down to 70mm diameter he ends up with some bark on the surface because of the shape of the branch; this should be an interesting feature



▲ Pic.4 He starts shaping the apple with the spindle gouge, with the top at the tailstock end. Keep the flute pointing in the direction of the cut and the handle tucked into your side



▲ Pic.5 Les likes this apple shape: the line is approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$ th from the top; if you go halfway you run the risk of ending up with a ball



▲ Pic.6 Drill a hole in the top with the 3mm bit; you could use the tailstock but a drill held in a handle and just inserted into the centre point is much quicker



▲ Pic.7 For authenticity Les likes to cut into the top of the apple; you must start this cut with the bevel of the tool rubbing the wood as in the photo



▲ Pic.8 If you present the tool to the wood like this the tool will catch, causing a big spiral cut up the timber; the tip of the tool should not come into contact at all



▲ Pic.9 He has swung the tool all the way around and into the end of the apple; don't push too hard in case you go across the centre of the work



▲ Pic.10 After you have sanded the top turn the apple around onto the screw chuck; protect the finished part of the apple with a business card



▲ Pic.11 Now carefully turn the lower part of the apple, taking small cuts and as before making sure the tip of the tool does not contact the wood; cut into the base as for the top



▲ Pic.12 Les dyes small dry sticks black for the stalk; for a few superglue is perfect, but for a batch he would use PVA; the apple is gloss lacquered



▲ Pic.13 The clever bit of the apple is on the bottom; this is a natural clove with the ball removed to leave a four-sided petal that glues into the bottom and creates a realistic bud end



## Goblet



▲ Pic.1 Mount up the blank between centres and remove the majority of the bark to leave a small amount at one end; this will become the natural edge of the goblet



▲ Pic.2 Once it's mounted in the chuck turn down the underneath of the edge to a simple curve; keep the tailstock in as long as you can for added security



▲ Pic.3 Hollow the bowl using a series of pull cuts; cutting from the centre to the outside means you're cutting with the grain and is the best way to remove the bulk of the material



▲ Pic.4 The final finishing cuts are the other way with a 6mm bowl gouge; as you go thin a push cut gives you more chance of keeping the bark on



▲ Pic.5 If you want to you can finish the inside curve off with a French curve scraper, taking light cuts and watching that edge – you don't want to knock it off now



▲ Pic.6 After sanding the inside of the bowl start taking the wood down on the outside to match the shape on the inside, using the bevel rubbing cut applied to the mushroom



▲ Pic.7 Keep checking the wall thickness with your fingers; if you don't get it thin and fairly even it will make the goblet top heavy



▲ Pic.8 As you get to the bottom of bowl you need to make every cut count; rolling the tool over to the left at the end of the cut will create a nice V at the transition of the bowl and stem



▲ Pic.9 Work the stem down in sections, about an inch at a time; when you have finished one part move onto the next, but don't go back to the top as you will break it



▲ Pic.10 The stem is finished with the same detailing as the top; the base is turned with a simple ogee shape; I think that a shallow base balances the piece better



▲ Pic.11 When sanding the stem support the work like this; work through the grits, making sure the abrasive cannot wrap itself around the work



▲ Pic.12 You can see how wobbly the work is; part it as normal but remember to support it at all times as it's easy to break it at this stage; spray it up with the gloss lacquer and you're done

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# Good Woodworking

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## **GLAZED DISPLAY CABINET**

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In 2015 Buckler's Hard, Hampshire will become a centre for the teaching and study of traditional shipbuilding. Michael Huntley shows how The Shipwright School was constructed from local oak

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Don't expect the mundane from the Wood Awards shortlist. We'll be announcing the winners, but if Endless Stair by Ann Dingli doesn't win at least a commended we'll eat our workshop aprons

## **PLUS...**

...Edward Hopkins is prepared to stand design on its head to achieve the desired result, Michael Huntley progresses his foundation course, Andy King gives tools the *GW* star treatment, Phil Davy is Around the House and Les Thorne keeps his lathe turning with techniques to master



# Finishing Touch

## Early Georgian mirrors

**T**his rather dilapidated piece (Pic.2, back) might be overlooked but is actually an early Georgian mirror with original mercury silvered glass. Although it is falling to bits and the silvering is badly damaged it is rare and worth restoring. Collectors would like to own it as a reference item. It is not very often that you see original condition early Georgian glass in local salerooms.

The top (Pics.3 & 4) is formed of simple scrolls that have then been veneered in walnut. That helps to date it because walnut was going out of fashion by 1730. Note how the back has been slightly undercut and how the top is held in place by simple rub-jointed blocks.

The cross-grain moulding (Pic.5) is carved from the solid and rub jointed onto the frame. There is also another important feature, hard to see but just visible, the straight line in the glass and parallel to the frame. This is a 'soft' bevel of less than  $7\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ , which is another very early feature. It is sometimes known as a Vauxhall bevel, referring to the first glass factory in England, owned by the Duke of Buckingham. All bevels made now are 'hard' firm lines, which is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to get good modern glass for old mirrors.

Pic.6 shows the method of securing the corners of the thin frame, or rather, it shows the weakness of the method! The corner has a tiny tenon and is reinforced with a feather of veneer let in and glued at an angle.

As you can see, the thin glass is held in by simple square rubbed on glue blocks. In later mirrors they used tapered blocks. The two straight lines on the silvering (Pic.1) are pressure marks often found on old silvering.

The final point to mention is the silvering. This was done with mercury. It is now illegal to work with mercury without suitable protection.

We all used to play with mercury as children but now I have to warn you that you may come across globules of mercury trapped in the frame of an old mirror. Take care.



Pic.1 The early Georgian mirror as found



Pic.2 The reverse of the mirror



Pic.3 The top, needing veneer repairs



Pic.4 The back of the top showing simple attachment points



Pic.5 Hard to see but there is a bevel line there



Pic.6 The corner construction

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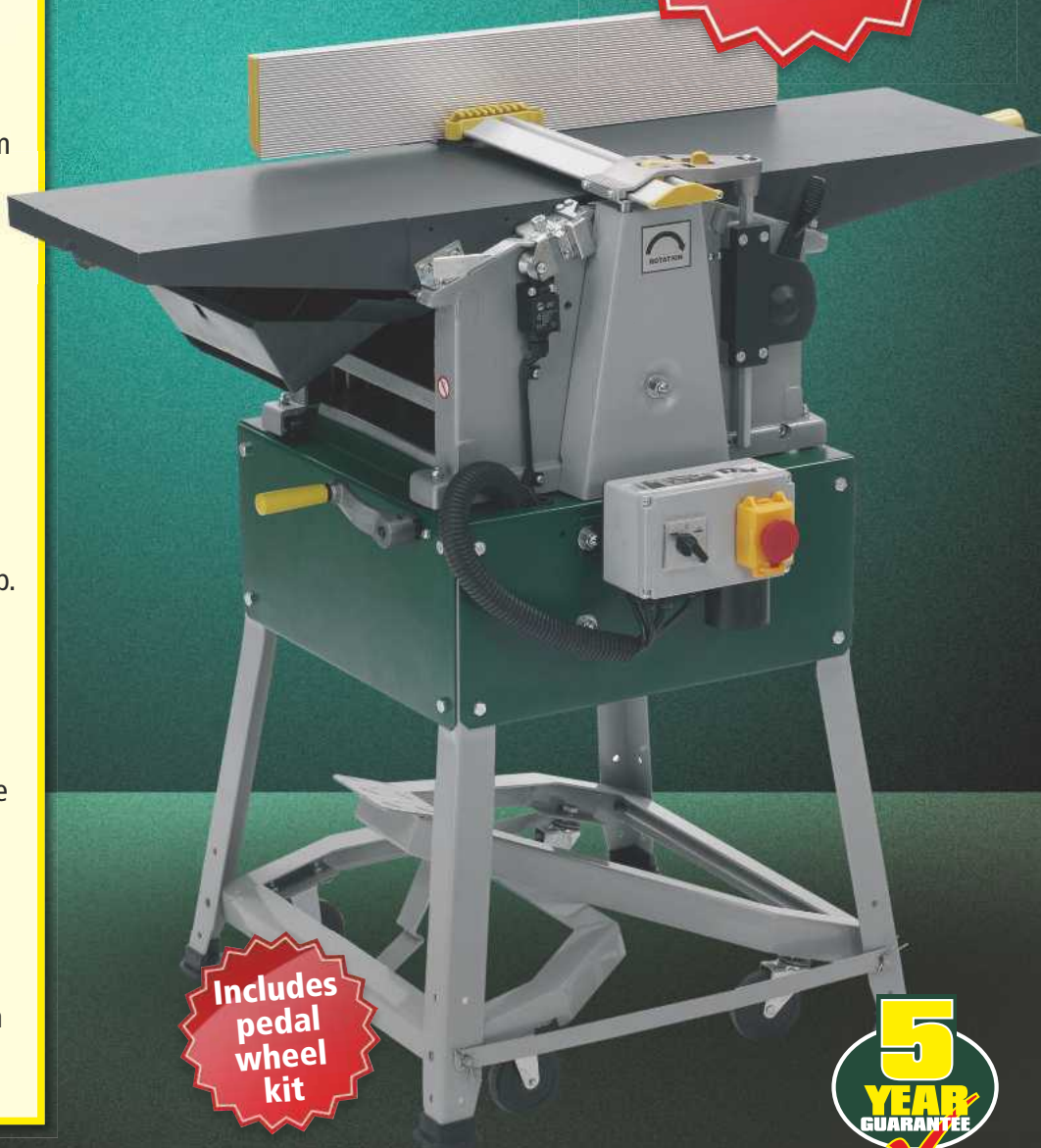
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